

Communication across Borders: Translation & Interpreting



A quarterly journal in Translation Studies
Online with print on demand
ISSN 2766-791X
JHK Press, USA

Email: cab@jhkpress.com
www.jhkpress.com
Volume 1, Issue 1, 2021

CABTI

Communication across Borders: Translation & Interpreting (CABTI) is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal published by JHK Press. The four annual issues contain sections with open submission academic articles in the field of cross-cultural communication and translation studies. The journal invites contributions representing innovative and critical views on the theory and practice of translation studies in all its aspects, including but not limited to: the theory, history and practice of translation studies.

CABTI publishes papers related to literature and translation, including:

- Intercultural Communication
- Cultural Studies
- Film and TV Translation
- Community Interpreting
- Translation and Globalization
- Literature Translation
- Non-professional Translation
- Interdisciplinarity in Translation Studies
- Cognitive Translation Studies

CABTI uses double-blind review: the reviewers' identities remain anonymous to authors and vice versa. Manuscripts submitted to the journal first go through an initial screening by the editorial team. Those that clear the screening are then sent to at least two experts for peer review. Email address for submitting your manuscript: cab@jhkpress.com. Editors in chief:

Table of Contents

1. Identity and Cultural Resistance: A Case Study of Fansubbing from a Cross-cultural Communication Perspective
by Xiaowei Zhou, 1
2. The Translation's Role in Chinese Films Entering the Western Market
by Zhimei Zhu, 8
3. Reviewing the Translation of the Chinese Animation Film *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* in North America from the Perspective of Eco-translatology
by Maren McDonald, 15
4. Professionalization of Medical Interpretation in the USA and its Implications for China
by Stewart Grant, 25
5. The English Translation and Cultural Dissemination of Chinese Web Novels
by Lin Zhao, 34
6. A Study on Chinese Single-Player Video Game Title Translation from the Perspective of Skopos Theory
by Zhixiang Li; Zhaofeng Jiang, 42



All articles in this issue are open-access, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Identity and Cultural Resistance: A Case Study of Fansubbing from a Cross-cultural Communication Perspective

Xiaowei Zou¹

Wuhan, China

xiaowei2639@126.com

Abstract: In this study, a Chinese fansub group - QAF was selected as the research object, and the online observation method was adopted to establish a long-term trusting relationship with the fansub group members. The researcher observed the activities of members in the group, and conducted in-depth interviews with group members to study how they construct their own identity in a virtual community, and how the textual reproduction behavior in fan culture context reflects the characteristics of “affective play”. The research shows that the concept of “affective play” is embodied in the textual reproduction process of the members of the fansub group, and the emotional factor is an important factor that affects the textual reproduction behavior of the members.

Keywords: fansub group, affective play, identity

1. Introduction

A fansub group is a community group that adds subtitles in their native language to audio-visual works and publishes them on file-sharing websites free of charge. As a new phenomenon of the subculture, the fansub group provides its members with a lifestyle different from the dominant culture and orthodox culture. As an intellectual group, the fansub group reconstructs its understanding and criticism of the world through deconstructing the video clip. They try to reconcile the contradictions between social life and media environment through their strength. Their appearance has become an opportunity for the audience to reject the strong discourse symbols of mainstream media and establish self-identity to some extent. The fansub group embodies the most fundamental characteristics of the Internet, bearing the selfless and volunteering mentality, promoting a spirit of freedom, openness and sharing, and bringing a new style of sub-culture. This research explores the concepts of identity and affective play through a case study of the Chinese gay fansub group QAF.

2. An interview with the group leader

“Queer as Folk Fansub Group” (QAF) is a Chinese fansub group specializing in gay-themed film and television translation. In recent years, the group has translated nearly 1,000 gay films and TV series. In 2011, Danlan.org, a famous gay website, interviewed

¹The author’s contact information in Chinese(作者): 邹晓威

Xiao P, one of the leaders of the group and the interview transcription was published on QAF's website (Danlan, 2011). This research analyzed the transcription and the relevant data about the group. The group QAF is named after the American TV show *Queer as Folk*. The original intention of the group was to provide a communication and video exchange platform for Chinese fans of the show. After the TV show ended, the group's enthusiasm about the show did not decrease. The group hoped to gain access to additional similar shows, so they started to collect and subtitle film and television works, either gay-themed or containing a gay sub-plot.

Due to censorship in China, no gay film and television works have been officially introduced. With the official channels being blocked, the QAF group acts as a bridge: QAF selects a batch of excellent foreign gay movies and TV shows, translates them, adds relevant background annotations, and then presents them to the gay communities in China through the Internet. Though it is now China's largest gay film and television production and publishing website, QAF did not intend to become so. QAF still hopes the Chinese radio and television censorship system can be more lenient and tolerant, and can provide an official channel for the import of gay-themed audio-visual works.

From September 2004 when the group was established to 2011, the QAF fansub group has established a library with more than 400 films and television programs. Currently, they translate 2 ~ 3 new films or videos every week. The weekly workload was set, in consideration of group members' Internet bandwidth, energy, time, as well as the fansub quality. From planning a subtitling project to the final product, the subtitling processes include the first translation draft, proofreading, second proofreading, timing check and quick double-check, then finally video-subtitles merging. By regulating the weekly work quota, QAF can make good use of time and fully guarantee the production quality, which is a key factor in QAF's success of becoming a large film and television fansub group in China. Around 2011, QAF started translating and transmitting Chinese gay films online. According to Xiao P, some Chinese directors entrusted QAF to translate their films for export. QAF stated they would implement any decisions made by the film director. Moreover, QAF hopes to refine and retranslate the rushed translations of the classic old films they completed so fans could add the works to their collection.

QAF started its operation translating *Queer as Folk*, one of the many popular American dramas available for Chinese online audiences. Nevertheless, according to Xiao P, QAF will not blindly follow or translate every popular drama. Rather, they plan to concentrate on gay-themed TV shows and films. According to QAF's observation, mainstream American TV channels control and reduce the gay elements in their shows to ensure drama ratings. Also, Cable TV channels lack financial support, which makes it difficult for them to guarantee the quality of gay-themed dramas, so some QAF members turn to dramas containing gay sub-plots. Many popular American dramas with gay sub-plots, such as *Glee* and *Modern Family*, are not "pure" gay dramas in their eyes. QAF believes that a fansub production team's energy and time are always limited, and complementary division of labor improves efficiency. They think that there is no need to re-translate completed works since many other fansub groups have already subtitled popular American drama, so QAF tends to devote their energy to the production of pure gay or gay-themed dramas.

3. Meaning-giving text reconstruction and cultural communication

Fans of popular culture generally only stay on the level of appreciating and commenting on texts, while these fanatical cultural fans are active, enthusiastic and participatory in their input to texts. They reconstruct the text, delve deep into the meaning behind the text, and then disseminate to larger audiences.

The Internet provides a broad platform for the general public to obtain information and share resources, and the class attribute of the general public became blurred in the virtual Internet community. People's participation in the cultural industry and their choice of cultural products are mostly determined by their cultural interests, spiritual satisfaction and the need to realize self-worth, rather than by their regarding the cultural products as unique cultural resources of a particular class (Gauntlett, 2000). That contributes to the borderless nature of cultural communication in the online world. Abandoning class essentialism, the participants of mass culture, especially the fanatical fans, will devote more time and energy to text reconstruction and cultural communication, which is a process that transcends the dualistic opposition of suppression and resistance, elitism and populism simplification. Most members of the online fansub group have received higher education. Take the QAF fansub group as an example. This fansub group, with a history of nearly 20 years, is mainly engaged in the translation of gay film and television dramas. At present, it has more than 100 members, covering people born between the 1960s and 1980s, including Chinese students from high schools and universities inside and outside China, white-collar workers, and overseas Chinese. They have plenty of time for computer use, and their foreign language proficiency is very high. Such a group, with different social identities and backgrounds, has an idealistic spirit of sharing and dedication, which can be regarded as the spiritual satisfaction and self-worth realization of the fan group.

4. Affective play embodied in the textual reproduction

Chinese internet users joined the group out of their interests and work voluntarily under high pressure. These fansub group members do subtitle translation as their part-time work, but they gained self-identity in that online Internet space. The audience's recognition of fansub groups is an affirmation of their values or beliefs. There is competition among different fansub groups, and subtitles updated earlier can get more downloads. The return of voluntary labor has nothing to do with the profits, but it can strengthen the self-identity of fansub group members.

The fansub group members are first the audience of film and television dramas, but the Chinese and English subtitles they produce are products viewed by Chinese audiences. Therefore, when they watch film and television dramas as audience members, they begin to develop narcissism and regard themselves as performers. Their process of multiple decoding and encoding, recoding and decoding of subtitles, shows the attitude of the fansub group as the audience interpreting the text. The interaction of dual identities has helped fansub groups transmit information effectively in small groups.

Through the observation of activities of fans in the gay fansub group, and in-depth interviews with the group members, the study discovered that the fansub members constructed their own identity in the virtual community, and their textual reproduction

behavior in fan culture context reflects the characteristics of “affective play”. The notion of affective play, according to Hills (2002), is that space where the fan fiction writers can experience, feel and live playfully within the texts that are the subjects of their fandom. This research shows that the concept of “affective play” is embodied in the textual reproduction process of the members of the gay fansub group, and the emotional factor is important because it affects the textual reproduction behavior of the members. It is because of the emotional attachment of gay fansub group volunteers who joined the fansub group to reproduce the text. In the reproduction process, the original meaning expression of the TV or film text was eliminated, and a new set of texts with emotional identity were created by attaching to the original text with imaginative means. Besides, members of the gay fansub group construct their own identity through the role-playing of “foreground” and “background”. “Role-playing” mainly refers to identity construction through the roles of “manager”, “chief translator” and “opinion leader” in the virtual Internet community. Meanwhile, in the context of fan culture, fans of the gay fansub group also gain “identity” through “affective play”. Affect plays a vital role in distinguishing groups with multiple boundaries, because it constantly constructs the possibility of differences and constructs a way to highlight specific differences. The gay fansub group skillfully integrates their own cultures with foreign cultures to achieve localization through text and cultural reproduction, especially within the environment of new media technology, showing great initiative and creativity. As communicators, the gay fansub group effectively controls the second wave of transmitting gay culture in Chinese-speaking areas in the process of secondary coding and implanted some localized elements and Chinese culture, which promoted the new trend of cultural exchange to some extent.

5. Constructing an identity through media use behavior

From two aspects of self-identity and group identity, this paper examines how the gay fansub group constructs identity through media use behavior. Identity is accomplished by self-examination and exploration of one’s relationship with others. First, although each fan is an individual, his or her self-identity construction cannot be separated from self-reflection and interaction with others. The author divides the study of self-identity into two parts. On the one hand, from the stage when the individual’s ideal self appears, the fan realizes the unity of “real self” and “ideal self” through a series of self-reflective activities. On the other hand, from the perspective of the relationship between individuals and others, without the reference function of others, the self is meaningless, and the evaluation and affirmation of others play a vital role in the construction of individual identity. In this paper, through the classification of fan types, the author discovered that these fansub group members received the affirmation, praise and recognition of others through their media use by playing different roles, such as group managers, opinion leaders and fansub group members, and building their identity from the specific media use behavior. Self-identity is to solve the problem of “who am I”, and the development of individuals can never be separated from the nourishment of the group. So, “who are we?” is the new question if we broaden the research scope from a gay fan to the gay fansub group. These questions involve group identity. The development of new media, especially the flourishing of the Internet, is the motive of identity construction of the gay

fansub group. Meanwhile, the fansub group's media use behavior can promote the establishment of identity labels.

In the 1980s, scholars including Fiske demonstrated the initiative and creativity of mass culture. Instead of adopting ideological analysis methods, they argued that the masses were not just passively controlled objects; there is a kind of active and independent power hidden in mass culture (Fiske, 2010). The audience's subjectivity in popular cultures such as film and television dramas is particularly obvious. As a member of popular culture, the members of the fansub group are, in a sense, acts of text reconstruction in the translation of texts, which is the outward release and embodiment of the receiver's subjectivity. This culture of online downloading is also a kind of acquiescence to piracy. That makes this group appear marginalized. Subsequently, the interpretation of the causes, behaviors and participating groups of the fansub group entails the complexity of the cultural game. Fan culture is a participatory culture, and the interpretation of existing texts may lead to new texts, new cultures and new communities.

6. Fansubbers' social identity in modern society

Goffman's dramaturgical sociology holds that life is a performance, society is a stage, and the process of interpersonal communication is the process of people performing "self", but this "self" is not the real self, but the "self" disguised by symbols (Goffman, 1978). Fansub groups have their own identities and roles in real life. These "selves" are often carefully decorated and play a regular role in front of others. The fixity and standardization in daily life, as well as the standardized living space, cause fan social self-alienation. Fans are more likely to regard the online community as a platform for self-presentation and extension so that they can more actively show themselves and vent their emotions in fan activities such as text reconstruction. Almost all online fansub groups volunteer to translate American TV drama resources without pay and regard subtitle translation as intervention and participation in modern life, as recognition and realization of self-worth.

Meanwhile, the incompleteness and fragmentation of modern society also breeds the incomplete and fragmented self. For these online fansub groups active behind the scenes, the identity of fans is, in a sense, a psychological compensation for this atomized and isolated modern life (Giddens, 1991). Fans can prove the value of individual existence by participating in the dissemination or reconstruction of their favorite cultural and industrial products. The seemingly mysterious communication between fans can be seen as experiencing an illusory sense of community. In this virtual environment, fan imagination and creativity are stimulated, and they also incorporate more self-emotion and creativity in the process of text reconstruction, thus forming a new consumption of cultural industrial products.

Corresponding to the official culture, the fan culture of the online fansub group belongs to folk culture in a sense, which has a unique set of cultural paradigm and power, sometimes showing amazing creativity in reconstruction and cultural communication, but sometimes also restricted and constrained by ideology. The fansub group, wandering on the edge of social norms in the traditional sense, is controversial and complex. The government intends to filter the cultural resources people receive, by controlling popular

cultural products, but this stimulates piracy. The prosperity of Internet downloading, though decreasing DVD piracy, has become another type of piracy. In the virtual community, the members of the fansub group have the cultural rights and channels that are difficult to obtain in real life. Therefore, this is a kind of self-awakening and recovery of cultural cognition and ideology brought about by life in the information age.

The mainstream cultural concept can easily regard the fansub group as a marginal group. They are regarded as being easily incited and sometimes blind. However, fans have formed another society that is contrary to mainstream society and formed a relatively open space where there is a confrontation between democracy and freedom. In reality, the members of the fansub group may not get such a channel to realize self-culture, and it is difficult to communicate with others due to ideological differences. In the online fansub community, it is easier to realize cultural rights and resonate with others' thoughts, which adds a romantic color to the interpretation and reconstruction of the text.

7. Conclusion

Within a fansub group, fansub members build their identity from the specific media use behavior. In the context of fan culture, fans in the gay fansub group also gain "identity" through "affective play". Affect plays a vital role in distinguishing from groups with multiple boundaries, because it constantly constructs the possibility of differences and constructs the way to highlight specific differences. As research on LGBTQ culture in China is limited, the author hopes to provide some valuable information for the study of online gay fansub groups through this study.

References

- Danlan. (2011). Exclusive Interview with Danlan.org: QAF Chinese Fansub Group (in Chinese) [淡蓝网独家专访：同志亦凡人中文字幕组]. from <http://www.qafone.co/viewthread.php?tid=140549>
- Fiske, J. (2010). *Understanding popular culture*: Routledge.
- Gauntlett, D. (2000). *Web. studies: Rewiring media studies for the digital age*: Edward Arnold, Ltd.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*: Stanford university press.
- Goffman, E. (1978). *The presentation of self in everyday life*: Harmondsworth London.
- Hills, M. (2002). *Fan cultures*: Psychology Press.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

The Translation's Role in Chinese Films Entering the Western Market

Zhimei Zhu²

Wuxi Canal Experimental Middle School, Jiangsu, China
11694503@qq.com

Abstract: Based on data retrieved from different databases and interviews with Chinese film translators, this research reviews the translation's role in Chinese films entering the Western markets, especially the American market. To increase the understanding of Chinese film translation involved in the film industry, the Translation Economics theory was applied in this paper. It is recommended that film translators bear in mind Nida's functional equivalence standard to produce a translation conducive to film profitability.

Keywords: Chinese films, American market, film translation

1. Chinese film export since 1980

In its broad sense, the 1980s was an era of the rise of Chinese language movies. Waves of movies from Hong Kong, then Taiwan and China, were brought to overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and other regions, becoming a new force in the international film industry. Among the films produced in China, the works produced by the "fifth generation" directors (i.e. graduates from the Beijing Film Academy in the 1980s) and animation movies produced by Shanghai Animation Film Studio were first imported by European cinemas and TV stations. However, even in this unprecedented golden age, few commercial films produced in Hong Kong were able to enter the sub-market of Europe and America in the mode of "trade circulation", while Chinese movies were only "exotic" artworks appreciated by the western intellectual class. They were not parts of the mainstream consumer culture like Hollywood movies in the United States or animation and video games in Japan. Previously, the state-owned China Film Import & Export Corporation had exclusive export privileges. When private studios gained the rights to export Chinese movies, China Film Import & Export Corporation's export business shrank much. Most of the overseas distribution of work by the "fifth generation" was undertaken by Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japanese investors.

In recent years, a new generation of Chinese film directors and producers have shown their strength and international insight. High-quality films that have grossed over hundreds of millions of dollars at the Chinese box office have been distributed in European and American markets, bringing increasingly great profits. Among them, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* grossed US\$ 128 million in the USA, 60% of the worldwide total, topping the chart of Chinese films released overseas (Box Office Mojo,

² Author's contact information in Chinese (作者): 朱志梅, 江苏无锡运河实验中学

2000). Nevertheless, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a rare case generating high profits in America. Most Chinese movies yielded less than one million dollars in the USA, with a few grossing several million. Due to the huge cultural differences between China and the west, Chinese films are not well recognized or appreciated by audiences in Europe and America. For example, the Chinese epic war film *Red Cliff* was only distributed in Asian markets. The cultural references in *Red Cliff* are very exotic to American audiences so it is difficult for them to understand. The total box office of *Red Cliff (Parts 1 & 2, 2018)* worldwide was 250 million US dollars, while its American version grossed only \$627,047 in 2019, less than 0.5% of the international total (Box Office Mojo, 2019). These box office receipts mainly come from China and Asian markets.

This paper intends to answer the following research questions: When will Chinese films have the opportunity to win coveted Oscars? When will Chinese movies join the overseas ten-million-dollar box office club? When can Chinese movies take on the responsibility of cultural communication between China and the world? To answer those questions, this research examines the mechanism for the Chinese film translation industry, identifies its shortcomings and proposes solutions.

2. Film translation cost

The film transmits information through languages of picture and sound. The importance of translation cannot be overstressed for a Chinese film to be understood in English-speaking countries, but translation has not been valued highly by the Chinese film industry. To better understand the film translation industry in China, a professional film translator's online journal (J. Dong, 2020) was analyzed and relevant movie data analyzed. The translator, Dong Jing, is the founder of Beijing Erdongxuan Translation Studio. The studio has participated in the translation of famous film and television programs such as *Wandering Earth (2019)*, *Crazy Alien (2019)* and *Sheep without a Shepherd (2019)*.

Through the analysis, it is found that translators of Chinese Films have not been given full credit. For example, in 2019, Dong Jing, the translator mentioned above, checked three films translated by his team and discovered that only in one movie, his name and his studio's logo were included. From 2010 to 2020, Dong Jing has been involved in the translation of dozens of films, and eight out of the ten clients considered his prices for translation were too high.

Dong Jing described how his translation studio gave quotes. A complete movie script usually has 30,000-50,000 words, and the subtitles are about 9,000-15,000 words. The translation price quoted is less than 100,000 yuan (15, 313 USD) for the translation of both the script and subtitles by native English speakers. Most customers considered that price too high. In sharp contrast, these film production companies are usually willing to invest more than 200,000 yuan on the production of one second of special effects.

The market outlook for TV programs translators is not strong either. For example, for the translation of a TV series, with about 8,000 words in one episode, the customer budget maybe only 1000 yuan, and needs to be completed within one day. According to Dong Jing, his company's experienced Chinese translators with more than 10 years' experience

usually can only complete 2,000 - 3,000 words of translation from Chinese to English per day, and even translators who are bilingual in English and Chinese can only translate up to 5,000 words a day.

The price 150 yuan (23 USD) for the English translation of one thousand Chinese characters to be completed within one day is extremely low. To cut the cost and complete such a project within the expected time, a translator can use machine translation (e.g. Google), then post-edit it. Though the deadline may be met, the translation quality is low. As Michael Sinterniklaas, an American dubbing actor and founder of NYAV Post recording studio suggested, Chinese film companies should invest no less money in translation than the cost of filming and promoting movies, to ensure the movie's success in the western market.

Currently, to release a Chinese film in overseas markets, the first step is to send the English version of the script outline to overseas partners and publishers; the second step is to ensure that the reviewers from different countries in each film festival can understand and like the script; the third step is for the foreign audience to read the subtitles (usually disappearing quickly on the screen) and understand the story and feelings of the characters. In each step, the corresponding script outline (including story brief and biographies), script and subtitles all contribute to the audience's perception of the whole movie.

A Chinese movie may create more than 2 billion yuan (306 million USD) of profit in the Chinese market but only less than 1 million dollars at the overseas box office. The cultural barrier may be the main contributing factor of the low profit overseas, but the ineffective translation produced by Chinese translators (non-native English speakers) can be another major factor. As native English speakers are a portion of the expected audience, it is suggested that professional native English speaker translators produce and evaluate the translation. The English spoken by Native English speakers is the most dominant language among all the languages used by different audience groups, so their use of the language is the most acceptable and practical in film translation.

3. Film translation quality control

Influenced by the “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” (aka *xindaya*) theory prevalent in China, many producers believe that Chinese-English translation must also embody faithfulness and elegance. However, the translation standard “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” is inapplicable in the film translation. As translation clients or patrons, the film production company may misuse the standards choosing translation service providers. The standards applied by these translation amateurs to evaluate translation professionals are unreliable.

As Dong revealed, rather than hiring native English speakers to translate a film or evaluate a film translation, Chinese film producers often ask a Chinese staff member proficient in English to check the translation quality using the translation standard “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”. Even if the original script is not literary (or “elegant”), these translation gatekeepers (quality control) still expect the translation to be “high-class and elegant” and “beautifully written”. However, these Chinese translators

hired are non-native English speakers and may produce “elegant” translation that contains grammar and word usage errors.

The film production crew members judging the translation are usually not qualified in this matter, as their English level is often not sufficient. Furthermore, these translation gatekeepers may have only been exposed to the “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” standard, unaware of other translation theories. This “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” standard, proposed by the famous translator Yan Fu, is not a systemic theory (Huang, 2003). It remains to be well expounded and improved.

Compared with the “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” standard, Eugene Nida's “functional equivalence” theory is more applicable for the translation of commercial films which stress profitability. In translation academia, Nida's “functional equivalence” theory has received wide and attention. According to Nida, “Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (Nida, 1969:12), and “there should be a high degree of equivalence of response, or the translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose” (Nida, 1969:24). By Nida's “functional equivalence” standard, the meaning is the most important, followed by linguistic form. In other words, it is necessary to avoid mechanical translation in the process of switching between two languages and achieve functional equivalence in the transfer of meaning between the two languages. It can be seen that translation is the reproduction of the form and meaning of the source language in the target language, and the form may hinder the reader's understanding of the meaning. The purpose of film translation is to help the target language audience receive the amount of entertainment similar to that of the source language audience. Therefore, without an understanding of the meaning conveyed in the film, the audience will not be able to enjoy the film fully, and the film production company or distributor will suffer a loss of revenue.

By using the “functional equivalence” translation standard, film translation is expected to be the most functional one that is often (though not always) colloquial and easy to understand. As Zhou Tiedong, a famous translation reviewer of China Film Group Corporation argued in the interview, from the perspective of producers, screenwriters and directors, the Chinese films for export should overcome the tendency of one-way personal expression; movies are a product, so they should be audience-oriented and the market should be considered (K. Dong, 2011). In that sense, Chinese film translation should tell a Chinese story in a way that foreign audience can understand.

4. Balancing between time and quality

The expectations of film and television translation customers are always that the translation should be both “fast” and “good”, but they create a dilemma for the translator as they usually need adequate time to produce a high-quality translation. Many film and television producers have not recognized that translating scripts is, just like writing scripts, art that requires time.

A high-quality translation requires close cooperation between film producers and translators. For example, in the summer of 2016, film translator Dong Jing and his team translated the script of *Wandering Earth* from Chinese into English. The producer of

Wandering Earth gave them a very detailed glossary at the beginning, which was very helpful in increasing work efficiency. At that time, Dong Jing led two translators and translated more than 20,000 words in seven days. With the original English script for reference, Dong Jing clarified the basic elements of script translation, such as format, tense and style. To complete the translation in a short time, the producer of *Wandering Earth* found more than one translation team, and Dong Jing's team only did part of the translation project.

Another example illustrating the importance of cooperation between the translators and the film production company is translating *Crazy Alien* (2019). In the early stage of *Crazy Alien*, Dong Jing's team was the only translation team outside of the film production crew, and they raced against the clock to ensure the quality. However, the crew still hoped that the translation team could complete the translation within one week or update the script within two or three days. *Crazy Alien* had numerous versions of the script. While they were translating between Chinese and English, the Chinese and American screenwriters were also revising the scripts. It took the translation team around four months to complete the work.

Errors occurring in English subtitles of Chinese movies are mostly because the film production company does not provide translators with the actual film. For the sake of confidentiality, the company only provides some lines or subtitles. When a scene changes greatly, it is often difficult for translators to understand the connections between two scenarios so they can only guess what happened.

Another difficulty translators often encounter in film and television translation is the frequent changes in the original text. After finishing the first edition of Chinese and English subtitles, movies are often edited and modified more than once, which means that the translation and subtitle timing should be changed too. If the changes are not communicated to the translator in time, then mistranslation or misplacement of subtitles will occur.

The advantage of teamwork is that the project can be completed quickly, and the disadvantage is that it is difficult and time-consuming to unify different team members' translation styles and quality. The ideal method to translate a film or a television program is to use only one translator to translate a script from beginning to end, which is most conducive to maintaining a consistent terminology and style. If it is Chinese-English translation, it is recommended to have native English translators involved in translation or proofreading.

In China, film translation for export is often completed by Chinese translators who are not native English speakers. That is mostly due to the high cost of using native English speaker translators. Film translation customers are often skeptical about native English speaker translators' Chinese proficiency as in their impression, very few native English speakers can speak Chinese. However, as Dong Jing stated, American translators that they have cooperated with for a long time have not only high proficiency in Chinese but also more than ten years' experience in translating literary works and publishing translated books. Nevertheless, the price of native English speakers is considered high for most customers. So it is important to caution them that the lack of native English speaker translators may lead to the failure of the English translation.

5. Dubbing, an expensive but effective translation mode

Due to its high labor cost and longtime requirement, dubbing is an expensive translation option for a small-budget film distribution company. Nevertheless, it may be an investment risk that is worth taking. For example, after *Ne Zha* grossed over 700 million US dollars in China, ranking No. 2 on the box office chart for all films screened on the Chinese mainland in 2019, the film entered overseas markets, equipped with the English dubbing aiming to eliminate the cultural barrier. In August 2019, *Ne Zha (English dubbed version)* was screened in North American cinemas. The English subtitles and dubbing were produced professionally in the United States and helped the film yield over 3 million dollars in the American market.

Chinese films are usually subtitled and rarely dubbed in the USA. In comparison, most Hollywood films entering the Chinese market are dubbed in Chinese. Compared with subtitling, dubbing is more time consuming and the cost is more than ten times higher. So the film distribution company has a difficult decision to make in terms of producing a dubbed version for the film. When a Chinese film's overseas box office is expected to be \$500,000, the \$100,000 budget for the subtitle translation may be too high. However, if the box office is expected to be \$10 million, it will be a cost-effective option to spend \$2 million on English dubbing. Although it costs more than subtitling, the dubbing produced by native English speakers and voice actors allows the audience to understand the dialogue without relying on subtitles. Compared with English subtitles, English dubbing is an easier way for English-speaking audiences of all ages and different cultural levels to appreciate Chinese movies.

6. Conclusion

To further promote the “going out” of Chinese films and television programs, more private enterprises should be encouraged to participate in the distribution overseas as the overseas distribution monopoly by China Film Group has been broken. To promote Chinese culture overseas, it is suggested that film translation, along with the artistry and technicality of films, should be improved to win over the audience. For a Chinese film to be exported is a product for profit, film translation should be conducted and judged by the “functional equivalence” rather than the “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” standard. If the budget allows, native English speaker translators should be employed for the film translation work; and dubbing (rather than subtitling) should be used to maximize the profit.

References

Box Office Mojo. (2000). *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. from <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/r12739766785/>

Box Office Mojo. (2019). *Red Cliff*, a two-part story centered on a battle fought in China's Three Kingdoms period (220-280 A.D.). from <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/r12003666433/weekend/>

Dong, J. (2020). The inner monologue of a film and television translation practitioner (in Chinese) [一位影视翻译从业者的内心独白], *Sohu News*. Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/372940528_120474495

Dong, K. (2011). Chinese film export intensified (in Chinese) [中国电影出口上演"欧美总动员"], *China Economy*. Retrieved from http://www.ce.cn/culture/whcyk/gundong/201101/24/t20110124_22165683.shtml

Huang, K.-w. (2003). The reception of Yan Fu in twentieth-century China. Cindy Yik-yi Chu, Ricardo KS Mak, *China Reconstructs*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 25-44.

Nida, E. A. T., Charles R. . (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*: Leiden: E. J. Brill.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Reviewing the Translation of the Chinese Animation Film *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* in North America from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

Maren McDonald
Tampa, Florida, USA
MarenMcd76@aol.com

Abstract: The Chinese film *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* entered the North American market, with English subtitles and dubbing versions. This paper compares the two, analyzes the differences from the perspective of eco-translatology, and discusses the possibility of enriching the concept of communicative dimension of eco-translatology with Translation Economics and Nida's functional equivalence theory. Through comparison of the two versions, this paper finds that the dubbing version of the film has greater deviation from the Chinese subtitles, and is generally closer to the three dimensions of the target language (English): linguistic, cultural and communicative. In terms of swear word translation in the cultural and communicative dimensions, the subtitle version used literal translation, while the dubbing removed all the swear words. In terms of readability, the dubbed English version is more colloquial and idiomatic, which makes the language easier to understand and suitable for children. The dubbing version fully demonstrates the translator's consideration of the audience demographics; meanwhile, its low-cost dubbing production also reflects the distributor's consideration of market and economic benefits.

Keywords: *Ne Zha*; Cultural symbols; Readability; Viewing experience

1. Eco-translatology Perspective/Theory Discussion

Eco-translatology utilizes Darwin's theory of evolution, and integrates ecology into translation studies. Eco-translatology examines the whole translation ecology. From the perspective of translation ecological environment, it explains the translation process, describes the relationship between the translator as the subject and the translation ecological environment, and discusses the survival and development of translators and translation products. The translation ecological environment in eco-translatology is a world in which the original text, source language and target language are combined, and an interactive whole is composed of interrelated languages, cultures and society, as well as the original author, translator, client and readers (audience). Translation ecological environment is a collection of factors that restrict translators' optimal adaptations and choices (Hu, 2008).

Translation is an activity that needs to adapt to not only the ecological environment of the source language, but also the ecological environment of the target language, in order to survive and take effect (Hu, 2004). To achieve this goal, translators need to transform in the following three dimensions to make selective adaptation and adaptive choices: linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension (Hu, 2013:114). The success of a translation is determined by the translator's degree of transformation in

these three dimensions. The higher the degree of “three-dimensional transformation”, that is, the higher the degree of holistic adaptation and selection, the better the quality of the translation (Hu, 2013:114). Specifically, in the process of translation, translators are expected to respect the language expression habits of the target language, balance the cultural output of the source language and the audience's acceptance of the target language, and strive to make the communicative function of the source language reappear in the target language.

In the transformation of linguistic dimension, the translator should consider the influence of the source language form and style on the target language. If the target language's form is too close to that of the source language, it may affect the understanding of the reader, and the text is not suitable for survival in the target language ecological environment. In the cultural dimension, there are cultural differences between the source language and the target language. When working on the transformation, the translator should consider the audience's acceptance of the target language and deal with it properly to avoid the overload of foreign cultures, which may lead to misunderstanding or incomprehension of the audience. In terms of communicative dimension, attention should be paid to ensuring that the target language achieves the communicative purpose similar to that in the original language. In the case of the translation of commercial films, translators need to produce their translation for the communicative purpose of entertainment.

Translation, like any other actions, always has an aim (Vermeer Hans, 1989:221). *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* (hereinafter referred to as *Ne Zha*) is a commercial animation film. Different from art films and documentary films, it aims at maximizing box office revenue and caters to mass entertainment. The overseas market expansion of *Ne Zha* not only creates economic income for the production company and distributors but also plays the role of overseas publicity for China. *Ne Zha* draws on Chinese mythology and was not produced by the mainstream western film industry. According to the statistics of Box Office Mojo, a website tracking box office revenue, the box office in China is \$720 million, while the box office in North America is relatively small, with \$3.7 million (Box Office Mojo, 2020). It is a niche film in North America, and its audience characteristics are different from mainstream audiences.

Subtitle translation and dubbing were produced for the film's distribution abroad. Subtitles and dubbing in movie translation are subject to different media transmission conditions and expected audiences, so there may be differences in the text content of the two translation versions. Foreign language subtitles mainly transform the auditory content of the source language into the text visual symbols of the target language, while dubbing transforms the auditory content of the source language into the speech auditory symbols of the target language. These two types of signs and symbols need to be synchronized with the image content (such as the beginning and end of the actor's speech and the mouth movements) to achieve the best viewing effect. Subtitles and dubbing have their advantages and disadvantages. Foreign language subtitles convert the speech of the source language into the text of the target language and present it to the audience. When watching it, the audience has a visual burden, which means they have to look at the pictures and read the subtitles. During that process, they often miss the important pictures, especially the facial expressions of the characters. While dubbing does not

increase the visual burden of the audience and allow them to concentrate on the picture and plot, it lacks the touch (e.g. intonation) of the original voice. From the perspective of the three-dimensional transformation of eco-translatology, the key duty of subtitle and dubbing translation is to transform the source language of movies into the target language ecology in three dimensions: linguistic dimension, culture dimension and communicative dimension, to conform to the source language ecology as much as possible. In the process of transforming from the Chinese context to English context, due to the influence of different factors such as translator, commercial operation and economic cost, the film content and emotion conveyed by subtitles and dubbing will be different.

Film is not only a cultural carrier, but also a commodity, and film translation can help the commodity create value in overseas markets. The difference between commercial film translation and other translations, such as science and technology translation, lies in its different functions, which have both active cultural transmission and entertainment functions. Two different small translation ecosystems are derived from different audiences. For example, subtitle translation audience of *Ne Zha* is mainly fans who love Chinese culture, while the small ecological participants of English dubbing translation are those who emphasize entertainment. These two small ecological audiences may also overlap. In terms of the communicative dimension, they all aim to achieve communication effect and commercial value, but the translation processes and forms are different. In different translation ecological environments, translators use different degrees of transformation from the source language to target language to adapt to the different translation ecological environments.

2. The film

The distribution channels of the movie *Ne Zha* in North America include cinemas, DVD and the streaming media Netflix. The American Netflix version of *Ne Zha* is covered by the TV content rating system, and its TV-14 rating implies the program contains content that parents or adult guardians think is not suitable for children under 14 years old. There are two translation versions of the movie provided by Netflix in America: a subtitle and dubbing version. The film was distributed in North America by the company “Well Go USA”. According to its official website, the company focuses on introducing movies from all over the world to North America and other places for distribution. In an interview with Xinhua News Agency, Annie Walker, the chairman of the company, stated: “*Ne Zha* is an attractive animation film. We bring the English dub to North America because we hope to share the film with not only overseas Chinese but also audiences from other ethnic groups. It's certainly a chance for a mainstream audience in North America to know more about Chinese film and Chinese culture.” It can be seen from that interview that the purpose of adding dubbing to movies is to cater to the mainstream, not just the minority fans of Asian culture.

This research randomly selected 30 English language films (released between 2000 and 2020) and compared their Chinese subtitles and dubbing versions. It is found that there are few differences between those two versions. The few differences lie in certain words and phrases. The main reason for the differences is that dubbing is expected to match the mouth movement of the characters. The echoes what Xiuyan Jia, a famous film translator in China, said in an interview conducted by Zhang (2020): “In cinema blockbusters,

subtitles are expected to be the same as the dialogues, while dubbing texts should match the mouth movements. The textual differences between subtitles and dubbing arise because dubbing is supposed to match the mouth movements of characters.” After examining five other Chinese films released overseas between 2015 and 2020, it is found that there is very little difference between the dubbed and subtitled versions. In comparison, there is a big difference between the subtitled and dubbed version of *Ne Zha*. The following is a detailed analysis of the differences between the subtitled version and the dubbing version of *Ne Zha* in three dimensions: linguistic dimension, culture dimension and communicative dimension. Although this paper lists three dimensions for discussion, sometimes the two versions are converted in two or three dimensions at the same time, so the analysis of these dimensions is not strictly separated during the discussion.

3. Three-dimensional analysis

3.1 The linguistic dimension

By comparison, it is found that the text conciseness of subtitle and dubbing versions is very similar. First of all, the author uses Antconc corpus software and Microsoft Word software to count the number of words and finds that the dubbing version contain slightly more words. The English spelling of the subtitle version is Ne Zha with a space in the middle, while the dubbing version uses “Nezha”, with no space. To reflect the actual number of words more truly, the researcher changed all the English spellings of “Ne Zha” in the two versions into NeZha and compared the number of words. After this processing, it is found that the number of types and tokens in the dubbing version is 2.7% more than that in the subtitle version, with the difference being small. According to the calculation made by Microsoft Word, the number of words in the dubbing version is 1.7% more than that in the subtitle version. Antconc treats words with apostrophes such as “won't” as two separate words, so the number of figures counted is more than that counted by Word. By comparing the word frequency lists, it is found that the top ten words in the list are almost equivalent in the two versions, which shows that the basic vocabulary usage of the two versions is similar. When the list was examined further down, it is found that the dubbing version contains 71 “huh?”, but the subtitle version does not have this word. This shows the difference between the subtitles and dubbing, that is, dubbing can express questions or rhetorical questions through voice intonation, to achieve the purpose of conveying information.

Table 1: Comparison between the subtitled version and the dubbing version

	Types (Antconc)	Tokens (Antconc)	Words (MS)	The top ten words on the frequency list
Subtitle	1418	7687	7385	You, the, I, to, 't, a, it, is, of, and,
dubbing	1456	7894	7505	You, I, the, 's, to, it, and, 't, a, that

After carefully comparing the two versions sentence by sentence, great differences were found in the textual content of the two versions. The dubbing version is more colloquial, while the subtitling version is larger and more difficult. The definition of big and difficult words means that these words appear less frequently in English. The following is an example showing the difference of vocabulary use between the subtitle and dubbing versions.

Example 1

Chinese: Shīfu pài wǒ hé shīdì qián qù shōufú (02:03:62)

Subtitles: My master sent me and a fellow discipline to subordinate it.

Dubbing: so my master, the supreme Lord of heaven, sent my brother and I to put a stop to the chaos.

In the above example, for the translation of the original Chinese word “shōufú”, the subtitle version uses the formal word subdue, while the dubbing version uses “put a stop”, an informal colloquial phrase. Also, the dubbing version adds explanatory information “the supreme lord of heaven”, to the translation of “Master”, so that the audience can better understand the Master’s status and why the Master can send them to complete tasks. In the cultural dimension, this information is added to the translation to adapt to the cultural environment of the target language.

The author invited a native English speaker (British, adult, male, numbered: NativeE) and a near-native English speaker (Chinese, adult, male, numbered: NearN) to compare the predicate verbs of the corresponding sentences in the two versions one by one, and calculated the number of large words and small words in the two versions. The list is as follows. The Chi-square test of these 87 samples with SPSS shows that the corresponding significance P-value is 0.000 (close to 0)<0.05, which indicates that the frequency of using large and small words in these two versions is different and statistically significant. In the linguistic dimension, the dubbing language is colloquial and easy to understand. From the perspective of communication, dubbing emphasizes communication, namely, entertainment, focusing on helping the audience understand the dialogues and making them laugh.

Table 2: Use of large vocabulary in two translated versions

Version	Large voc. frequency		Small voc. frequency		Total number
	NativeE	NearN	NativeE	NearN	
Subtitles	81	80	6	7	87
Dubbing	6	7	81	80	87

From the above data analysis, it can be seen that the big-word style in subtitle translation is more in line with the linguistic dimension of the original Chinese, while the dubbed small word style is more suitable for the linguistic dimension of the English target language targeting the children audience. The subtitle translation of *Ne Zha* retains the language style of Chinese as much as possible and adapts to the language style of the

target language to a limited extent. This shows that translators made adaptive choices of the language forms in the process of translation. That is to say, in subtitle translation, the language features of Chinese are fully transferred in English subtitles; however, dubbing translation is more suitable for the ecological environment of the target language, and it is more flexible in the linguistic dimension.

3.2 The cultural dimension

The translation of movie dialogues is a communicative action across cultural differences. As a part of the film, film dialogues are also the carrier of culture. Due to cultural differences, if the translation works do not effectively transmit cultural meanings, the works will not adapt to the cultural system of the target language translation ecological environment, which may lead to a communication failure. In the translation of swear words, the subtitle version uses literal translation, while the dubbing version tones down or omits those words. For example, in the Mandarin version of the movie, there are such rude words as “niǎo mìng”, “qù sǐ ba”, “bài gè pì”, and “gǒupi”, and in the English subtitle version, they were translated as similar swear words: “screw you”, “go to hell with that” and “bull shit”. In the dubbing version, all these rude words are omitted, while the feelings or opinions expressed in the rude words are translated in non-taboo language. For example (see below), “screw you” in the subtitle version is a very impolite phrase in English, which expresses the attitude of “not accepting fate”, while the dubbing version directly expresses this attitude of “not accepting fate” without swearing.

Example 2:

Chinese: Qù nǐ gè niǎo mìng

Subtitle: Screw you!

Dubbing: 'Cause it is not the boss of me.

The core concept discussed in the film is to fight against fate, not fearing other people's judgment. This film is told from the perspective of China and Chinese culture. The film's transmission overseas can help more people understand Chinese people and Chinese culture. Although the animation's visual effect is on a par with that of the West, the film contains cultures unfamiliar to American audiences. If the audience does not know much about Chinese people or mythology, they will not be able to understand cultural-specific jokes and stories. There are many references or lines similar to Stephen Chow's films in the story, such as “bù zhīdào wǒ néng bùnéng káng dé zhù”, “fàng kāi nàgè nǚhái” and so on. When dealing with these lines, the dubbing version uses free translation, and the meanings are quite different from the original Chinese text. The following example illustrates how the line “tāmen jūrán néng káng dào xiànzài,” similar to that in one of Stephen Chow's movie, was translated.

Example 3:

Chinese: Tāmen jūrán néng káng dào xiànzài. Bù xiǎodé jiā shàng wǒ, dǐng bù dǐng dé zhù.

Subtitles: I can't believe they're still holding on. If I jump in, I wonder if they'll survive.

Dubbing: How dare they not invite me to join in... I love a good party. Stay strong, you two.

In the above example, the subtitle version's meaning is close to that of the original. In comparison, the dubbing version is more idiomatic and colloquial, conforming to English language habits. Its meaning far from the original, but the communicative purpose is similar to that of the Chinese original, namely, entertainment. The dubbed version focuses on helping the audience understand the dialogues and making them laugh. From the linguistic dimension, the language is colloquial and easy to understand.

3.3 Communicative dimension

Besides the transformation of linguistic dimension and cultural dimension, eco-translation also includes the adaptive selection transformation of communicative dimension, that is, adaptive selection and transformation of communicative intention between the source language and target language is needed. In the communicative dimension, the ecological environment of film translation focuses on factors such as the communication effect and commercial value of the source language and the target language. This adaptive choice transformation of communicative dimension requires the translator to “focus the adaptive selection on the communicative level and ensure the communicative intention in the source text is reflected in the target text” in addition to the transformation of linguistic information and the transmission of cultural connotation. (Hu, 2013:237).” The communicative function of language in commercial movies can be understood as the function of arousing people's reaction, that is, entertainment function. If these different translation methods can be tailored to serve different target audiences, and achieve a communication effect similar to that of the original film, the maximum commercial value can be achieved, that is, the maximum communication function.

To analyze the feedback and viewing needs of the audience, the author collected the comments the audience posted on the website of Internet Movie Database (IMDB, 2019). The viewers leaving their comments on IMDB.com include both movie theater viewers and Netflix viewers. In addition, the author interviewed three American Netflix viewers whose native language is English. According to the analysis, it is discovered that the audience of American cinemas is mainly overseas Chinese, as well as a minority of English-speaking audience who cannot speak Chinese. The dubbed version is more suitable for non-Chinese speakers looking for entertainment. The subtitle version is suitable for Chinese culture fans, or Chinese language learners who can listen to the Mandarin audio and read the English subtitles to absorb the contents of the original film as much as possible. For example, a viewer named David M comments:

The story is wonderful and the animation is excellent. If you watch it on Netflix, even people like me who can't speak Mandarin should watch the version with Mandarin audio track and English subtitles. English dubbing [quality] is not worthy of such a good film, and it is far from subtitles.

According to various comments on IMDb, for those who want to learn Chinese culture, they generally expect the subtitle version to convey Chinese culture as completely as possible. However, the English subtitles of *Ne Zha* are fast, and reading those subtitles requires a high level of fast reading. For example, some viewers commented: “The

subtitles can pass by VERY fast and/or get lost against the background, so get ready to read fast.” Another viewer commented: “The freaking subtitle will blow your brains out, it's like decoding the entire story from start to finish! Feels like your starting to learn English while still in your mom's tummy.” It can be seen that subtitles are not easy to read for every audience member. However, dubbing requires lip-synching, which requires more work for dubbing actors and translators. For example, a viewer commented: “I started watching dubbing, but I hated that the audio track didn't match the character's lips, so I immediately switched to the subtitle version.” It can be seen that the synchronization of audio track and lips is very important for some viewers to watch the dubbing version. Therefore, high-quality dubbing production is also very important for film communication. Although the dubbing production of the film is flawed in terms of lipsynching, it was generally praised by the audience. For example, a viewer named westsideschl said: “English voicing, often shaky in Asian films, was quite modern Western & culturally appropriate.” One Netflix viewer interviewed by the author said: “Apart from some Chinese names such as Taiyi Zhenren, the dubbed English is very idiomatic. The dubbing can score 9 points out of 10.”

In this research, foreignization and literal translation used in the subtitled version, and free translation and communicative translation methods used in the dubbing version, are explained from the perspective of eco-translatology. The translators of the subtitle version chose to work within the constraints of the original text, while the dubbing version overturns its constraints. It can be seen that the translator has made different choices and adopted different translation strategies to adapt to the two small ecological environments.

4. Refining eco-translatology

The purpose of the English translation of *Ne Zha* is to create income, publicize Chinese culture and promote the development of the animation industry. Based on the analysis, the subtitle and dubbing translations of the movie *Ne Zha* have well realized the transformation of linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension, and the translated texts have well adapted to the translation ecological environment. The translation of the film assists in the transmission of the film, thus achieving the functions of entertainment and China's “international communication”, and increasing the audience's positive impression of China. Interpreting the differences between English subtitles and dubbing from the perspective of “three-dimensional transformation” in eco-translatology can help us better understand the translation process and results of the film, and provide a great reference for similar cultural communication in the future.

According to the eco-translatology viewpoint, translation success is determined by the translator's degree of transformation in these three dimensions. The higher the degree of “three-dimensional transformation”, that is, the higher the degree of “degree of holistic adaptation and selection”, the better the quality of the translation (Hu, 2004:214). In the dubbing translation of commercial films, the adaptive choice transformation in the communicative dimension is the key point in three-dimensional transformation. It is especially necessary to ensure that the communicative intention of the original film (that is, entertainment and creating commercial value) is reflected in the translation to create

economic benefits. Hu Gengshen believes that translation should not only minimize the ecological damage of the original text but also best maintain the ecology of the translated text (Hu, 2013:240). Due to the film rating system in America, the dubbing of *Ne Zha* eliminates swearing words, adapts the culture in the source language, and makes a large number of dialogues colloquial, which damages the ecology in the original text to a great extent, but the translation achieves a better effect in the target language context. Therefore, to evaluate whether the dubbing translation of *Ne Zha* is the best, we should not only look at whether it keeps the original ecology, but more importantly, whether it adapts to the translation ecology.

As for the communicative function, Hu Gengshen did not define it in detail in his book *Eco-translatology*, while Nida's exposition discussed it more deeply. Hu Gengshen translated his term “jiāoji wéi” as “communicative dimension” in *Glossary, the Main Terms of Eco-translatology* in Appendix 2 of his book. Communication here is the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information. And what is communication in commercial movies? What does a film production company want to communicate with the audience? The definition of communication needs to be broadened for the research of film communication. In its broad sense, it is emotional communication through visual and auditory stimulation, arousing audience resonance and entertaining audience. Nida maintains that “translation is a kind of communication” and “the meaning and intention of the original text must be clearly reflected” (Nida, 1969). Nida made a comprehensive analysis of his “functional equivalence” theory from all aspects, and put forward that “translation is communication”. Nida included the reader-response theory, and fully considered the receptive ability of target readers. The author believes that Nida's functional equivalence theory can better explain the communicative dimension transformation of English subtitles and dubbing in *Ne Zha*. Given the commercial nature of the movie *Ne Zha*, using the concept of translation economics for reference will help increase the understanding of the translation of *Ne Zha*.

From the perspective of translation economics, the subtitle and dubbing translation of *Ne Zha* is “both an investment and a commodity (Xu, 2014:35)”. The cost of dubbing was relatively low because no TV or movie celebrities were invited to do the dubbing. The distributor was cautious and did not allow much additional expense, hoping to get a certain amount of profits with limited investment. In terms of the economic benefits of film translation in North America, the subtitle translation product is more suitable for the cultural needs of the niche market (Chinese cultural fans), while the goal of dubbing translation is to meet the needs of the public. *Ne Zha*'s box office in the US exceeded three million dollars, while other Chinese animations brought to America such as *Journey to the West: Return of the Great Sage*, and *White Snake: Origin*, grossed less than one million dollars. So in comparison, *Ne Zha* has made great progress in economic profits. Although the success of a Chinese film in North America is closely related to the quality of the film itself, the role of translation cannot be underestimated. The success of Chinese film culture export largely depends on subtitles and dubbing.

References

- Box Office Mojo. (2020). Ne Zha (2019). from https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt10627720/?ref_=bo_gr_ti
- Hu, G. (2004). Translation Adaptation and Selection Theory (In Chinese) [翻译适应选择论]: Hubei Education Press.
- Hu, G. (2008). Examining Translation Theory from the Perspective of Terminology: An Overview of Translation Adaptation and Selection Theory (in Chinese) [从术语看译论——翻译适应选择论概观]. *Shanghai Translation*, 0(2), 1-5.
- Hu, G. (2013). Eco-Translatology: Construction and Interpretation. (in Chinese). [生态翻译学: 建构与诠释]. Beijing: The Commercial Press
- IMDB. (2019). Ne Zha. from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10627720/>
- Nida, E. A. T., Charles R. . (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*: Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Vermeer Hans, J. (1989). Skopos and commission in translational action. *The Translation Studies Reader*, 221-232.
- Xu, J. (2014). *Translation Economics (Chinese)* [翻译经济学]: National Defense Industry Press.
- Zhang, Y. (2020, 2020-08-29). A Dialogue with the film translator Jia Xiuyan (in Chinese) [与电影字幕翻译贾秀琰对话], *The Paper* ((澎湃新闻)). Retrieved from https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_8913150



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Professionalization of Medical Interpretation in the USA and its Implications for China

Stewart Grant
Meford, Oregon, USA
Stugrant12@hotmail.com

Abstract: Professionalization of medical interpretation is a social process by which the interpretation transforms itself into a true profession of the highest integrity and competence. For almost 30 years, medical interpretation has experienced all aspects of the professionalization process in the United States, and the industry has been growing quickly. China's economic prosperity in recent years and the influx of foreign populations have created a huge demand for medical interpretation. This paper reviews the professionalization of medical interpretation in the USA and assesses the prospect of professionalization in China.

Keywords: medical interpretation; professionalization; USA; China

1. Introduction

The history of medical interpretation can be traced to the beginning of human migration. In the early days, immigrants who could speak two languages often acted as “intermediaries” to assist in communication. Nowadays, this kind of “natural interpretation” by bilingual users who have not received strict professional training can still be seen everywhere. When foreigners in China or Chinese with limited English proficiency in America go to hospitals or clinics for medical treatment, they need a professional translator. The patient feels that each word spoken by the doctor is important, so they will feel uneasy if they miss any words or sentences the doctor speaks due to their limited language proficiency. Compared with conference interpretation and liaison and escort interpretation, the research on medical interpretation in China is still rare and limited. The author used the keyword “医疗口译” (medical interpretation) to search for papers concerning medical interpretation, in CNKI, the largest Chinese journals database in the world. Subsequently, only two related papers were found. In contrast, in recent years, the research on medical interpretation in the United States has been increasing. This paper explores the rise and development of medical interpretation in the United States and assesses the prospect of the professionalization of medical interpretation in China.

2. Characteristics of Medical interpretation

The interpreter builds a bridge of language and culture between doctors and patients and serves those in need with their accurate translation and professional knowledge. Specialized training is an important aspect of professionalization. As a profession, either full-time or part-time, interpreters must have special skills required by the profession. Bilingual ability is not equal to interpreting ability. The following can only be acquired

through professional training: the interpreter's knowledge of their own identity, familiarity with professional standards, and skills needed for professional interpretation, such as recognizing doctors' handwriting, understanding euphemisms, and dialects when patients describe their illness, and mastering a large number of medical terms.

Compared with general interpretation, medical interpretation is more challenging. Patients suffering from illness, psychological anxiety, infectious diseases, will inevitably affect the interpreter, causing the interpreter's failure in completing the task. Therefore, medical interpreters must have psychological endurance more than ordinary people. The practice has proved that necessary pre-translation preparation and basic medical knowledge are still necessary. One of the difficulties in medical interpretation is that the interpreter may encounter ethics-challenging matters, such as a patient asking the interpreter how their illness can be cured. If the interpreter does not handle it well, they may violate the professional ethics of medical interpreters and may receive warnings from the translation association or the employer. Interpreters may encounter disturbing situations such as a patient dying during the interpretation process, or patients are in severe pain in the ICU unit. These occasions can test the interpreter's psychological ability. After experiencing such occasions, interpreters are recommended to receive psychological counseling from social workers.

Medical interpretation is the bridge of communication between doctors and patients. For patients whose mother tongue is not English, the medical interpreter translates what the medical staff said to the patient, and then translates the patient's words to the medical staff. If there are cultural differences, the medical interpreter explains these cultural differences to both doctors and patients, so that they can fully understand and communicate with each other. However, the medical interpreter is only responsible for translation, and cannot answer patients' questions or make any decisions for the patients.

Medical interpretation is in great demand in two countries with many immigrants, the United States and Canada. More and more foreigners and new immigrants are seeking medical treatment, which promotes the increasing demand for medical translation in America, especially Chinese translation. For example, the Provincial language Services (PLS) in British Columbia, and non-profit organizations such as MOSAIC and SUCCESS recruit interpreters of various languages every year. After signing contracts with the interpreters, these organizations allocate jobs to them as contract workers. PLS is regarded as one of the largest interpretation service providers, and Mandarin and Cantonese are the two languages with the largest number of demand and recruits. Telephone interpretation and video interpretation in the United States have developed rapidly. Telephone interpretation companies recruit interpreters all over the world, and their clients call to have a three-way telephone or video call, and the interpreters provide interpretation for both parties on the phone or video. With flexible working hours, medical translation has gradually become the new favorite career choice for some Chinese.

As a large immigrant country, more than 25 million residents in the United States have Limited English Proficiency and are regarded as LEP people (Zong & Jeanne, 2015). According to medical providers, 80% of hospitals in the USA often encounter LEP patients, 81% of physicians often receive LEP patients, and 84% of federally certified

health centers provide outpatient services for LEP patients every day (NACHC, 2008). However, data shows that the adverse medical events encountered by LEP patients due to language barriers are twice as many as those under normal conditions (Jacobs, Shepard, Suaya, & Stone, 2004). For a long time, the main translation service for LEP patients still was the “natural interpretation” by bilingual speakers, including bilingual medical staff, family members and friends of patients, and even minor children. Mistakes made by untrained “natural interpreters” are hidden dangers leading to various medical accidents, even loss of life. Eliminating the language barrier is the necessary way for LEP clients to enjoy medical services equally.

3. Professionalization of medical interpretation in America

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stipulates that discrimination against LEP clients by federal-funded institutions or projects is prohibited. In August 2000, Executive Order No.413166 of the United States further declared that LEP patients enjoy the services provided by various institutions equally. In the same year, the Department of Health of Human Services of the United States stipulated that LEP people must be provided with federal financial assistance for language translation services. Patients whose mother tongue is not English have the right to apply to hospitals for medical translation services when visiting a doctor in the United States, and this service is free in some states (such as California). In 2003, the employment rules of interpreters and standards for qualified interpreters were put forward. Since then, occupational medical interpretation in the field of health care has been gradually rising in the United States.

Besides being able to speak both Chinese and English, medical interpreters need professional training. Medical interpretation involves cultural differences, specific etiquette, and specialized skills, so “natural interpretation” is not adequate. Professional interpreters should have professional quality, abide by professional norms, and master professional skills. Medical English has a large amount of specialized vocabulary. Even native English speakers are not familiar with all the items in the medical vocabulary. Medical interpretation practitioners who have obtained the qualification certificate are more favored in the market than those who have not, and their income is higher. However, due to the shortage of medical translation talents, the current translation threshold is not high. Currently, the requirements for entering the medical translation field are generally just fluency in Chinese and English, quick response, and shorthand ability. There are many translation companies of different sizes in the market, and the larger ones are LanguageLine and CyraCom.

3.1 Professional standards in the field of medical interpretation

Professional medical interpretation denotes interpreters have received professional training, strictly follow professional ethics, master complex medical terms, and can accurately and completely converse between two languages. They aim to help medical practitioners and patients with limited English proficiency communicate effectively and improve the quality of medical services. Until now, although the United States has made great progress in providing language services for LEP patients, the shortage of qualified medical interpreters is still an important reason why those people cannot get effective health care services. To provide medical interpreters with a code of ethics to follow, the

American Department of Health and Human Services, California Healthcare Interpreters Association (CHIA), National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), and International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) have respectively formulated and gradually improved their professional standards. Specific standards were given, concerning how interpreters should deal with the issues of language, culture, ethics, morality, and belief when they perform their tasks, and how they should help achieve the ultimate goal of medical interpretation, which is to promote smooth communication between doctors and patients and ensure the effect of diagnosis and treatment. The introduction of the guidelines also guides vocational training, interpreter recruitment, and quality supervision.

There are specified professional ethics standards for medical interpreters in the USA. In addition to the two most basic requirements of “accuracy and completeness”, there are many other requirements, such as keeping the patient’s privacy confidential and not doing anything other than interpretation. Before the official translation begins, the medical interpreter first indicates to both doctors and patients that the content of the interpretation will be kept confidential to everyone except the medical team. Many interpreters may feel that with their years of experience in interpreting and the knowledge they have learned, they can give some medical advice to patients in private. This is not allowed. Interpreters are not doctors and the line is not to be crossed. However, due to legal or ethical needs, if the patient has the intention to murder, mistreat children and the elderly, or other domestic violence, the interpreter is obliged to inform the doctor.

The interpreter is expected to guide and encourage direct communication between doctors and patients. Interpreters shall not make suggestions, show partiality, discriminate, or make negative body gestures such as shrugging and rolling eyes. Meanwhile, they should not conceal their relationship with the patient and avoid occasions where the patient is the interpreter’s family member or friends. If the relationship with the patient may cause embarrassment and discomfort to the interpreter or the patient, which may lead to unsmooth communication, the interpreter should request for withdrawal from the scene. However, if there is no substitute interpreter, the interpreter must overcome psychological discomfort and complete the interpretation task.

The relationship between the interpreter, doctors, and patients is equal. This relationship does not change due to differences in gender, race, religion, belief, culture, social status, and political views. If tension between doctors and patients has developed, interpreters should help defuse it. Interpreters do not try to influence patients’ decisions and choices with their judgment, respecting patients’ space, and visual privacy needs. The key role of medical interpretation is to help LEP patients communicate with doctors for timely diagnosis and treatment. Although the interpreter has no obligation to be the “spokesperson” of the patient, from an ethical point of view, if the interpreter perceives that the doctor is discriminating against the patient, they should intervene in time.

In an ideal interpreting situation, an interpreter is an invisible person and a mouthpiece. However, the scene context is complex and changeable. To achieve smooth communication, interpreters must assume their multiple identities, and ensure that patients receive effective medical services before, during, and after translation. Interpreters are expected to be honest, reject bribery, and refuse to accept tasks for which

they are not competent. They should be proficient in bilingual conversion and interpreting skills, receive continuous training, and improve professional standards.

3.2 Qualification certification

In October 2009, the National Board of Certification for Medical interpreters (NBCMI) conducted a pilot test and started the formal test on April 28, 2010. In June, it produced the first batch of certified medical interpreters in history. On October 18, 2010, the first medical interpretation certification test sponsored by Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) was also launched nationwide. Although NBCMI and CCHI are relatively independent certification bodies, their designs for the tests are very similar, and they delimit the boundaries and scope in terms of candidates' registration qualifications and examination contents.

Currently, to become certified, one can opt for either NBCMI or CCHI's test. The two tests, similar in their difficulty, are both computer-based. They require that the test taker has fluency in both Chinese and English and a good command of professional medical vocabulary. The focus of the two exams is slightly different. CCHI's exam includes consecutive interpretation, simultaneous interpretation, and visual translation, while NBCMI's exam does not have simultaneous interpretation, focusing on visual translation and consecutive interpretation. Before taking the medical interpretation qualification examination, test takers must have received 40 hours of medical interpretation training or practical experience including the time spent attending academic seminars related to interpretation or engaging in other fields such as law and community translation.

CCHI, the American Association of Medical Interpreters Certification, has two certification examinations: Core CHI (Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter) and CHI (Certified Healthcare Interpreter), namely Subject 1 & Subject 2. Candidates can only apply for the second one after passing the first. Subject one, CoreCHI, is a computer test, knowledge test, two hours, 100 multiple-choice questions, all in English. Subject 2 CHI is also a computer test, oral test, one hour, you have to choose a specific language. CHI-Mandarin is the choice for Chinese interpreters. Both certification exam full scores are out of 600, and a score of 450 means passing the exam. Before registering for the exam, candidates should first complete 40 hours of training. CCHI's official website provided a list of training institutions. There are on-site lectures and online courses. The training price is generally around \$600. For example, there are two training institutions: ALTA Language Services and Medical Interpreting Training School (MITS). No study/work background in the medical industry is required to register for the exam and there is no need for translation/interpretation experience. Candidates are required to provide proof of proficiency in a second language. It can be a transcript of a language exam or a certificate of obtaining a degree in a relevant country, for example, China or Taiwan.

Subject 1 CoreCHI Exam (computer-based, knowledge test, two hours, 100 multiple-choice questions, all English questions) includes: Professional Responsibility and Interpreter Ethics (22%); Manage the Interpreting Encounter (22%); Healthcare Terminology (22%); U. S. Healthcare System (15%); Cultural Responsiveness (19%); Subject 2 CHI Exam (computer-based, one hour, seven different scenarios, spoken

Chinese and English) includes: Consecutive Interpreting (75%); Simultaneous Interpret (14%); Sight Translation (9%); Translate Healthcare Documents (2%)。

Once a person obtains the medical interpreter certificate, it means they are qualified to provide the related services. Nevertheless, a medical interpreter needs not only certain training before the exam but also long-term training after entering the workplace. Even the best and most experienced interpreters cannot guarantee to finish every task well. New interpreters need to continue their education, ask experts to supervise and guide them, and listen to the feedback from doctors and patients, to improve their professional quality day by day.

Trade associations are non-profit and self-disciplined organizations voluntarily organized by enterprises in the same industry, which mainly balance and coordinate the interests of the members within the organization, communicate information, maintain order, and conduct self-discipline management. The main function of medical interpretation association is to formulate professional standards, ethics, and training standards; hold regular seminars and publish periodical newsletters to convey the voice of translators; develop and improve the professional status of medical interpreters, and ensure good working conditions and salary of interpreters; establish an interpreter database to help clients obtain effective medical services.

Almost every state in the United States has its medical interpretation associations. Some of these associations are organized by interpreters themselves, while others are affiliated with universities, community hospitals, or clinics. The influential ones include national IMIA and NCIHC and CHIA in California. There are also special sign language translation associations in America, such as the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Like other industries, the knowledge in the field of medical interpretation, especially medical vocabulary, is constantly updated. Under the guidance of an effective and credible qualification examination, interpreters should adhere to “lifelong learning” for the well-being of patients and the improvement of their professional accomplishment. NBCMI stipulates that after certification, the certificate holder should receive at least three Continuing Education Units (equivalent to 30 hours) every five years, and relevant seminars and training courses will be attended to expand terminology reserves and enhance memory. Otherwise, the certificate will be revoked and the certificate holder will have to take the exam again.

4. The development of medical interpretation in China

China is not a traditional immigrant country. However, in the past 30 years, with the rapid development of the economy and the expanding contacts with the world, more and more foreigners have come to China for short-term and long-term residence due to work, study, or travel. According to the official document of the Chinese Finance Department (2019), in 2018, 30.54 million foreigners entered China. In 2016, more than 900,000 foreigners came to work in the Chinese mainland (Xu & Zhou, 2017). Peking Union Medical College Hospital, established as early as 1921, provided medical services in English without using interpreters. Instead, English-speaking medical staff communicated directly with foreign patients. This situation still exists today. Seeing a doctor has become a source of anxiety for many foreign guests because of the language barrier. It is

undeniable that the research on medical interpretation in China has just started. Especially, as a profession, medical interpretation has only attracted the attention of a very small number of individual researchers in the field of interpretation. When a Chinese hospital has a demand for interpreters, it finds a staff member who can speak some English and does not ensure the interpretation quality. Even if some large hospitals in China have reception rooms for foreign guests, they only use a limited number of English-speaking medical staff members, and the medical service may not be satisfactory. The development of medical interpretation in the United States fully shows that in consideration of China's situation today, it is necessary and urgent to train specialized medical interpreters and conduct scientific research. The specialization process of medical interpretation in the USA can give China a good reference.

Medical interpretation has a high market demand in China and has attracted the attention of translation experts and scholars. The author searched for "medical interpretation" with the search engine Baidu, and the search results include the recruitment of medical interpretation talents by translation companies, medical interpretation training programs provided by training institutions, and "medical interpretation vocabulary" of interpretation learning websites. The results show that medical interpretation has begun to have a market in China. Professionalization of interpretation includes the professionalization of interpreters. It should be emphasized that it is a trend that English-speaking experts and scholars engaged in humanities, science, and engineering fields join the interpreting team. Interpretation training should be aimed at a wider range of people, which is the guarantee for comprehensively improving the quality of the interpreting team. Accordingly, the voice of establishing professional interpretation qualification certification is getting louder.

5. Implications for China

China's current medical interpretation is like a virgin land waiting to be reclaimed, and the market demand determines the development prospect of this industry. Based on the history of the professionalization of medical interpretation in the United States, medical interpretation in China is predicted to go through several stages: forming trade associations, formulating ethics codes, perfecting qualification certification, and providing professional training. IMIA, the earliest professional association of medical interpretation in the United States, was founded in 1986. By June 2010, it finally completed the first national medical interpretation qualification certification in history, more than 20 years since its foundation. According to the specific market, China should formulate professional standards and certification evaluation systems in line with China's national conditions. This will be a long-term process that requires the joint efforts of a large number of "like-minded people". The author hopes that more and more people will join this team, conduct theoretical and empirical research, establish a scientific training system, and train qualified medical interpreters.

The development of medical interpretation in China is inseparable from the research on the training of medical interpreters, while the training system of medical interpreters is rarely discussed in depth in China. Because of this, the author puts forward the following thoughts, hoping to give some inspiration to the academic circles.

(1) The establishment of medical interpretation courses. In the curriculum of American medical interpretation training institutions, medical terminology appears most frequently. There are two main reasons: First, it is determined by the basic characteristics of medical interpretation. Secondly, the most obvious problem in medical interpretation and translation lies in the use of technical terms. Therefore, it is necessary to set up medical terminology courses systematically, and learn from the professional standards of foreign qualification certification institutions, the role of interpreters, the basic skills of interpretation, cultural and ethical issues, and communicative skills.

(2) The training of medical interpreters. Medical interpreters should have a solid bilingual foundation and interpreting ability, basic medical knowledge, mastery of medical terms, the ability to deal with language, culture, ethics, morality, beliefs, and other problems in diagnosis and treatment. Furthermore, they should know how to promote smooth communication between doctors and patients and ensure the effect of diagnosis and treatment. In 2009, China's Ministry of Education issued Document No.1 to comprehensively promote the master's degree training program and train advanced applied talents, including the pathways of translation and interpretation (MOE, 2009). It is recommended medical colleges and foreign language colleges cooperate to offer translation masters' programs. Translation master's programs have high-quality teachers and strong scientific research support, which can strengthen interpreters' bilingual language ability and carry out relevant scientific research to ensure the scientific training of interpreters. Medical colleges have abundant medical resources and can provide a teaching platform for medical interpreters' medical expertise and medical terminology teaching. Meanwhile, their affiliated hospitals can also provide medical interpreters with internships and even practice venues.

(3) The professionalization of medical interpreting. The social recognition degree of medical interpretation in China is lower than that of conference interpretation. The lack of social cognition is one factor. The main reason is that the professionalization process of medical interpretation lags behind other specialized interpretations. Currently, there are no unified professional standards, and the market is in disorderly competition. The development of medical interpretation in the United States has gone through a process from non-standardization to standardization, from disorder to order. Some scholars suggest that the professionalization of medical interpretation in China should draw lessons from the professional system of medical interpretation in the United States. Meanwhile, combined with the specific market, China should work out the professional standards and certification evaluation system in line with its national conditions.

6. Conclusion

With the rapid development of China's economy and the increasing status in the international arena, the exchanges between domestic and foreign personnel will be continuously strengthened, and medical interpretation will have more and more market and training needs. At present, developing the discipline of medical interpretation and its personnel training can expand the scope of China's interpretation research, improve the level of interpretation research, and enrich the connotation of interpretation research. It is hoped that academic research on medical interpretation will attract enough attention and more "people of insight" to join further research on medical interpretation.

References

- Finance Department. (2019). The basic situation of the tourism market in 2018 (in Chinese) [2018 年旅游市场基本情况]. from http://zwgk.mct.gov.cn/zfxxgkml/tjxx/202012/t20201204_906481.html
- Jacobs, E. A., Shepard, D. S., Suaya, J. A., & Stone, E.-L. (2004). Overcoming language barriers in health care: costs and benefits of interpreter services. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(5), 866-869.
- MOE. (2009). *Several Opinions of the Ministry of Education about Advancing the Cultivation of Full-time Master Degree Graduate Students (in Chinese)* [教育部关于做好全日制硕士专业学位研究生培养工作的若干意见]. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A22/moe_826/200903/t20090319_82629.html.
- NACHC. (2008). Serving Patients with Limited English Proficiency: Results of a Community Health Center Survey from <http://www.nachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/LEPReport.pdf>
- Xu, B., & Zhou, K. (2017). Over 900,000 foreigners have worked in Mainland China since 2016 (in Chinese) [2016 年来中国大陆工作的外国人员超 90 万人次]. from http://www.gov.cn/shuju/2017-04/16/content_5186221.htm
- Zong, J., & Jeanne, B. (2015). The Limited English Proficient Population in the United States in 2013. from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-united-states-2013>



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

The English Translation and Cultural Dissemination of Chinese Web Novels

Lin Zhao³

Shiyuan College of Nanning Normal University, Guangxi, China
63370688@qq.com

Abstract: In the digital age, Chinese web novels, distinguished from the traditional paper-based novels, have become an important genre of Chinese literature. The paper reviews the history of Chinese web novels, and their spread to the world through amateur and professional translation and online publication. From the perspective of cultural dominance and communication, this research examines the translation and proposes different translation strategies for different translation purposes. It concludes that Chinese web novels have a niche market in the West, and domestication is the norm of translation of these web novels targeting the dominating English culture.

Keywords: Chinese web novels, English translation, culture

1. Development and overseas promotion of Chinese web novels

Chinese web novels, started at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, keeping pace with the first wave of Internet development in China. Especially, one type of Chinese web novels, Xianxia or Xuanhuan novel, based on Chinese traditional mythology and martial arts literature (Y. Wang, 2017), has just become popular in recent years after they had been long ignored by the mainstream for a long time due the conservative attitude of the mainstream literature in China. Web novel creators, unfamiliar with the mainstream literary norms, discovered that the Internet is their ideal kingdom. They do not have to follow the old path of newcomers in traditional literature, that is, being forced to accept the rules of the system, genre and ideological trend. In 2003, Qidian.com, China's web novel base camp, established a VIP charging system in which readers are required to pay for access to the updates of certain popular novels (Qidian, 2020). From then on, authors could gain financial rewards within that website, and did not have to go to traditional publishers to sell their creations. These writers, mostly born in the 1980s or 1990s, gained their writing inspirations from Chinese classical literature and ACG (Animation, Comic, Game) culture in Europe, America, Japan, and South Korea (Rong, 2017).

In recent years, Chinese electronic literature (or web novel) has been translated and published online for the world to read, so its scale and influence have been further expanded outside of China. According to the *White Paper on the Development of Electronic Literature Going Overseas in 2020*, the overseas market scale of Chinese

³ The author's contact information in Chinese (作者): 赵琳 南宁师范大学师园学院

electronic literature reached 460 million yuan in 2019, and the number of Chinese electronic literature users outside China reached 31.935 million; by 2019, China exported more than 10,000 online works overseas, covering more than 40 countries and regions (Shanghai Observer, 2020). As early as the beginning of 2015, Chinese web novels spread fast in North America. In 2016, there were about 20 active Chinese-to-English web novel translation groups including Wuxiaworld and VolareTranslations. Most of the members were “overseas Chinese” or Chinese language learners from all over the world, especially North America and Southeast Asia (Mo & Chen, 2016). Most translation groups had their own websites to publish their translations. The largest group Wuxiaworld, established in December 2014, has Chinese web novels translated by electronic literature fans. Wuxiaworld’s works are mostly translated from Qidian.com’s originals — amateurs translate the novels in exchange for fan donations (L. Wang, 2016). Wuxiaworld.com has a large readership, receiving numerous visits every day. According to the Alexa website ranking, on 1 November, 2020, Wuxiaworld ranked 2,473 in global Internet traffic and engagement over the past 90 days. In the global comprehensive ranking, it even surpassed Qidian. Wuxiaworld’s readers come from more than 100 countries and regions around the world, and the top five countries with the number of readers are the United States, the Philippines, Canada, Indonesia and the United Kingdom. According to Wuxiaworld’s “about” page, the website now has 46 translators in 2020. The mechanism of Wuxiaworld’s content output is that the group first finds suitable translators, and then translators choose works for translation. In the process of translation, translators usually form a team with two editors (Wuxiaworld, 2020).

In 2017, Wuxiaworld signed a 10-year cooperation agreement on translation and electronic publishing with Webnovel.com (aka Qidian International). Webnovel.com, an overseas portal of China Literature (Yuewen), is one of the important sources of electronic literature for export, and has expanded its footprint all over the world (Xu, 2019). Wuxiaworld’s previous translations have always been in the gray area in the copyrights laws. The founder RWX (aka Jingping Lai) negotiated with Qidian for several months, and finally gave the latter the authorization for publishing the English translation of 20 web novels. Webnovel.com now owns more than 400 English translations of Chinese electronic literature, and more than 44,000 original English works created by over 30,000 overseas writers, with nearly 40 million visitors (Xu, 2019).

Chinese electronic literature has experienced many stages: (1) works were authorized for publication; (2) the overseas portal website Webnovel.com owned by China Literature Group was established; (3) Chinese electronic literature was translated and exported on a large scale, and finally, (4) authors outside China were encouraged to create original works. Thus, the operation mode of Chinese electronic literature has been brought overseas, and more overseas local high-quality authors have been discovered. The legalization of electronic literature translation means that it has entered the commercial mechanism, and thus has been formally incorporated into China’s official grand plan of cultural export. It is reported that China Literature Group will also continue to increase investment and promotion efforts in overseas markets, including arranging overseas exchange trips of well-known authors and the export of film and television dramas, games, and animation.

2. Overseas readers' acceptance of Chinese web novels

Chinese web novels have been discovered by English-speaking readers, mainly due to the active translation and dissemination by young Chinese readers. RWX, the founder of Wuxiaworld, revealed that their fans of Chinese web novels originally came from an English language forum website Spcent, where internet users discussed and translated Chinese martial arts movies and novels. Most of these people are overseas Chinese from America and Southeast Asia who are very interested in Chinese culture. According to RWX, for overseas readers, the most important thing at present is a novelty. These martial arts fantasy novels in China are quite new to foreign readers, the concept of becoming immortals through cultivation does not exist in the West. The translation works by RWX and Wuxiaworld gradually received acceptance by certain groups of overseas readers, just like the acceptance of Japanese culture by Americans, which started from subcultures such as comics and games.

The recognition of Chinese web novels by foreign readers comes from the universal reading “pleasure” of human beings. The pleasure brought by reading electronic literature can be “produced”. For example, Xianxia, a typical web novel genre, utilizes a set of writing rules and story development patterns according to humans’ desire mode, thinking mode and reading mode. The storyline is usually predictable: at a certain point, the hero and heroine inevitably “encounter”; then, the two have misunderstandings; at a certain point, the enemy is bound to make trouble. This writing, also called “patterned literature”, has the “iron law” like that of Hollywood commercial films, which ensures the arousal of readers’ emotions. When readers’ pleasure in reading is mobilized by the mature narrative structure, it is very common for them to become addicted. So, even if a web novel contains layers of routines and nothing interesting to read, its fans will still not abandon it, and will wait anxiously for anything new to be produced.

Compared with classic Chinese martial arts novels such as *The Magic Blade (tiānyá míngyuè dā)*, Chinese web novels are better received by western readers, as they are not so “Chinese”. According to translator RWX, the reason behind that is the fact that there is a bigger cultural gap between traditional Chinese martial arts novels and western readers. There are numerous Chinese historical allusions in traditional Chinese martial arts novels, much more than those in Chinese web novels. Novels with fewer Chinese historical allusions tend to be more popular in the western market. Nowadays, many Chinese fantasy novels have incorporated western cultural elements, especially those of game culture, which are familiar to younger people. For example, the popular web novel *Coiling Dragon*’s character names and story settings are all western. In comparison, another web novel *I Shall Seal the Heavens (Wǒ yù fēng tiān)* is not as western, so new foreign readers are recommended to read *Coiling Dragon* first, then progress into *I Shall Seal the Heavens* which is considered as an upgraded version from the first one in terms of cultural familiarity.

3. Translation of Chinese web novels

Translators have played an important role in promoting web novel. Since 2015, overseas fan communities have spontaneously read and translated Chinese electronic literature. The translation of Chinese web novels includes both manual translation and so-called

artificial intelligence (AI) machine translation. In 2019, Webnovel.com started to use AI technology to translate some web content, so translation efficiency has been greatly improved (Mei, 2019). Readers can edit and correct the AI translation during their reading, and the revisions will help the translation model to continuously optimize the effect. The reader-participation translation mode is revolutionary in the translation industry, and its influence is yet to be reviewed in future studies.

For translators of Chinese fantasy novels, it is also a big challenge to accurately and properly translate the terms and proper nouns with Chinese cultural characteristics. According to web novel translators, two things need to be dealt with carefully to produce high-quality readable translation: (1) linguistic form transformation between different languages, and (2) cross-cultural communication. It is always a great challenge for translators to find a balance between conveying the original meaning of Chinese and making translation easy for readers to understand. At present, the translation level of overseas electronic literature is uneven. Some translation contains problems such as missing meanings, inaccurate translation, and even using machine translation without post-editing. Most online translators are in the primary stage, that is, they translate word by word without adapting their translation to the target language context. That kind of translation is not going to meet readers' higher requirements for translation aesthetics as these readers are evolving.

3.1 Translators and their elevated status

Hundreds of translators have been translating Chinese web novels into different languages, mostly English. Taking Webnovel.com as an example, there are currently more than 200 translators and translator groups distributed around the world, especially in North America and Southeast Asia, and more than 200 English translation works have been launched, with a cumulative number of words exceeding 200 million (Liu, 2018). These translators are mainly foreigners (non-Chinese citizens) and often have three characteristics: they are familiar with the culture of English-speaking countries, Chinese tradition and contemporary culture, and electronic literature. One famous translator on Webnovel.com is CKtalon (aka Hongwen Wen), a Singaporean research engineer who graduated as a physics major in an American university. CKtalon has been translating Chinese web novels in his spare time since 2015. As a star translator of Webnovel.com, CKtalon translated a large number of electronic literature works in his spare time, totaling more than four million words. His representative translations include *Path of Soaring Sword* (*fēi jiàn wèn dào*) and *True Martial World* (*zhēnwǔ shìjiè*). When he was a child, Hongwen Wen learned Chinese from his mother. In November, 2015, Hongwen Wen started the Chinese-English translation of the Chinese fantasy work *True Martial World*. Since then, he translated works in different genres, such as the second dimension, the city, and Xianxia (literally, Immortal Heroes).

The translation reward system adopted by Webnovel.com and Wuxiaworld is actually quite controversial: the money given by the reader goes to the translator, not the author. According to Wuxiaworld's website, most of the translations had actually received translation authorization from the author, so it appears reasonable that the translator receives financial enumeration since the translator has worked. Nevertheless, the biggest controversy in this matter is that copyright holders (authors) do not get any financial

benefits from their foreign readers. Wuxiaworld even puts the name of the translator at the top of the introduction of the works. What's more, even many foreign readers have become fans of translators. Therefore, the translator has gained a higher status than before, and the original author has become invisible in this case.

3.2 Innovations in translating words with Chinese Cultural references

To help readers understand words with Chinese cultural references, translators add annotations to the words. With the online platform, annotations are hidden but can be easily accessed with a click of the mouse. According to the translator Hongwen Wen, the aim of translation, is to assist in smooth cultural communication and exchange, so it is necessary to ensure the translation's readability and fluency when transcoding electronic literature (Liu, 2018). One of the major difficulties of translation lies in the accurate translation of "Oriental words" such as *jīn dān*, *yuán shén*, and *shénxiān*. Wen remembered that when he first started translating *True Martial World*, he spent nearly two hours on the translation of each chapter, much longer than he expected. He stated he did not know how to handle those idioms and sayings. Then he discovered the two-pronged approach: translation + annotation. He reviewed a large number of documents, selecting the word with the highest accuracy and acceptance, and then explained it in his translation to help readers understand the story and cultural meanings behind the word. The website allows the translator to annotate a word or sentence on their back end platform, and when it is displayed on the front end, a small gray mark will appear on the right side of the word, and the reader can click it to see the complete explanation. That does not affect the reading experience. Rather, it helps the reader access the annotations. In addition to textual annotation, many translators also use illustrations or videos to make reading more interesting. For example, next to the word "tàijí quán", a video of an old man practicing Tai Chi is accessible for readers. The multimedia usage in translation text is unconventional compared with the traditional book printing.

Besides conveying the original meanings, translators also attempt to transfer the "aesthetic feeling and artistic conception of words" (Liu, 2018). To achieve that, translators may use words containing Greek or Latin prefixes, suffixes, and roots to translate certain Chinese or Buddhist concepts. For example, for the Buddhist term *sānqiān dà shìjiè*, translator Wen decided not to use the colloquial version "3000 Great Worlds" preferred by many other translators. Rather, Wen translated it as 'trichiliocosm', a combination of tri- + chilia- + Ancient Greek *κόσμος* ("world"). For another example, concerning the English transliteration of Chinese words *hòutiān* and *xiāntiān*, Wen argued that on the one hand those translations are difficult for English readers to understand, and on the other hand, they lack the concepts of 'before birth' and 'after birth'. So Wen used 'postnatal' and 'connate', formal words containing prefix "post" and "con" and the Latin root "nat" meaning "born".

The translation of electronic literature, different from traditional publishing, requires a suitable content production mechanism to improve its production efficiency. In order to effectively avoid the confusion of translation, after some exploration, Qidian International set up a full-platform vocabulary database and sorted out more than 700 specialized terms. By content, the terminology can be divided into three categories: Oriental fantasy, Xianxia, and city; by type, it can be divided into common words,

proverbs, and idioms. In order to standardize and optimize the translation of electronic literature, Hongwen Wen and his translator team established a bilingual glossary for the translation of fantasy works. That is especially necessary, as a web novel is usually very long, containing around 1,000 chapters. A term base will help translators keep their term use and the translation of character names consistent. Meanwhile, on the online forum, there is a special section to introduce the basic concepts of Taoism, for both readers and translators.

3.3 Cultural differences

Certain social values embodied in the Chinese web novels may be considered offensive if they are translated directly without alteration. To ensure the survival of translation, translators may be required to omit or blur those cultural references. For example, derogatory remarks against Japan and South Korea pejorative terms such as “bàngzi” for Korean people and “xiǎo rìběn” for Japanese were found in the novels. Due to the historical conflicts between China and its neighboring countries, Chinese writers may often use those terms in their novels, nevertheless, they are considered racist in the west. In addition, in the novels, there are main characters who are male chauvinists discriminating against women. That also violates the moral values of western readers. In 2020, as the racial tension and class conflicts became more intense in the US, Chinese-style web novels have gradually been resisted by more American readers who perceived sexism and racism in the web novels. The translator may need to alter or edit those parts, so as to keep the new texts in line with the target language readers’ values. According to ETVolare, the founder of VolareTranslations (Wu, 2020), many translators she knew were forced to resign from their original companies because the Chinese web novels they were translating aroused strong opposition from Western readers, and many platforms and translation groups are under considerable pressure (Wu, 2020). To get a foothold in the western market, some adjustments and changes in writing or translation may be required.

4. Conclusion

Compared to Chinese classics like *Journey to the West* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Chinese electronic literature has a better chance to reach foreign audiences. Though studied much in academia by Asian Studies scholars, those classics have a little market or commercial values in the United States (L. Wang, 2016). Chinese electronic literature has a small market share in the US, that is, it is a niche market, rather than mainstream. For instance, in 2016, translator RWX gained his fame in China, and was interviewed by Chinese media every week for half a year, but he was never interviewed by the American media.

Apart from the fans of Chinese martial arts novels, quite a percentage of western fans did not discover Chinese web novels directly; rather, these readers interested in Asian culture first read Japanese light novels, then they turned to Chinese web novels. Currently, these electronic literary translation works are discovered through word of mouth. Hoping to gain recognition of mainstream American readership, RWX planned to use advertising to expand the influence of Wuxiaworld to the west. In an interview with Mo and Chen (2016), RWX stated that people unfamiliar with Oriental culture are not interested in

Chinese electronic literature; after all, they have abundant locally published readings available to them.

China's electronic literature has not reached the influence and dissemination level like that of Japanese animation, American Hollywood blockbusters, and Korean idol dramas. As the earliest cultural product exported from Asia, Japanese animation has accumulated a considerable number of fans in Europe and America. Comparatively speaking, Chinese electronic literature is a new player, trying to attract a larger audience. It is believed by translator Hongwen Wen that it is necessary to localize translations of Chinese web novels. That is, for readers from different regions and countries, Chinese web novels can be adapted so that they can be better understood. Translation works that have value resonance and cultural resonance for the target language readers may become more popular than those that do not. Namely, a translation that is target-culture-oriented survives and prospers better. The translation and spread of Chinese electronic literature may provide a reference for the dissemination of other types of cultural works.

When the Chinese web novels are translated into another language and spread overseas for the “mass culture industry”, some elements are discounted in cross-cultural communication. That is to say, “Chinese cultural elements” are lost to a large extent and whatever remains in the translation is absorbed by readers selectively. The “Chinese culture’s going abroad” is not as much as what most Chinese people expected. Currently, the translation strategy domestication is recommended and preferred in the translation of Chinese web novels targeted at English speaking countries. It has become a norm of Chinese electronic literature in English. Domestication, a concept proposed by the Italian-American scholar Lawrence Venuti (1995:21), aims to eliminate differences between different languages and cultures so as to ensure target language fluency and smooth reading. If the main goal of the Chinese web novel translation is to disseminate Chinese culture, then foreignization, also called resistancy, is recommended, as this translation strategy challenges the target-language culture and exerts its “ethnocentric violence” on the English text (Lawrence, 1995:24).



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

References

- Lawrence, V. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A history of translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Liu, C. (2018). Web novels need to be both mysterious but also "entertaining" enough, so they can be popular with foreigners (in Chinese) [不但神秘而且够“爽”，这样的网文才有老外看], *Nanfang Daily*. Retrieved from <http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/n1/2018/1017/c404023-30346868.html>
- Mei, S. (2019). China Literature and Caiyun Technology jointly launch the AI translation works to accelerate exportation [阅文与彩云科技合作上线 AI 翻译作品 加速出海步伐], *Tech 163*. Retrieved from <https://tech.163.com/19/1225/11/F186PC3L00097U7R.html>
- Mo, Q., & Chen, S. (2016). Chinese electronic literature super popular overseas: The "folk translation groups" behind the curtain (in Chinese) [中国网文在海外：爆款网文背后的“民间翻译组”们], *The paper*.
- Qidian. (2020). A brief introduction of Qidian (in Chinese) [起点简介] from <https://www.qidian.com/about/intro>
- Rong, Z. (2017). Fantasy Fiction: An Alternative "Cultural Communication" Facing the English-speaking World (in Chinese) [玄幻小说：面向英语世界的另类“文化传播”], *South Reviews (Nánfēng Chuāng)*. Retrieved from <https://www.nfcmag.com/article/7233.html?version=pc>
- Shanghai Observer. (2020). World Electronic Literature “made in China”, *Shanghai Observer*. Retrieved from https://k.sina.cn/article_3844617568_e528356002001w8qk.html?from=cui
- Wang, L. (2016). Chinese Online Novels Find Foreign Fans. Retrieved October 10, 2020, from <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1685/chinese-online-novels-find-foreign-fans>
- Wang, Y. (2017). Globalization of Chinese online literature: Understanding transnational reading of Chinese Xuanhuan novels among English readers. *Inquiries Journal*, 9(12).
- Wu, Y. (2020). Foreign netizens also love "xiuxian (cultivating to immortals)"? (in Chinese) 外国网友也爱“修仙”？ *QQ*. Retrieved from <https://new.qq.com/omn/20200807/20200807A008RO00.html>
- Wuxiaworld. (2020). About Wuxiaworld(TM). from <https://www.wuxiaworld.com/>
- Xu, Y. (2019). Rather than being dropped into a foreign land, Chinese electronic literature attracted numerous fans. How did it do it? (in Chinese) [比起简单的作品落地，“网文出海”如何升级圈粉？], *Wenhui*. Retrieved from <https://wenhui.whb.cn/third/yidian/201910/22/296070.html>



A Study on Chinese Single-Player Video Game Title Translation from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Zhixiang Li; Zhaofeng Jiang

Nanning Normal University, Guangxi, China

Abstract: As video games gain popularity worldwide and become one of the most common entertainment forms in the digital era, the game's title is given both commercial value and entertainment value. In the process of translation, in order to achieve these two values, the correct translation theory and strategy need to be adopted. Translating Chinese game titles accurately and effectively into English is challenging for Chinese translators. The idea “the end justifies the means” from Skopos Theory indicates that the translation effects decide translation strategies. Based on Skopos Theory, this paper explores the translation of Chinese game titles, and provides suggestions about translation methods for Chinese game translators to facilitate Chinese game developers' goal of going global.

Keywords: Localization; Game text translation; Chinese-to-English translation; Skopos Theory

1. Single-Player Video Games

A single-player video game is an electronic game that involves interaction with an input device to generate visual feedback for a player, whereby only one player is expected throughout the course of the gaming session. According to a report issued by Gamma Data (2019), the actual sales revenue of China's single-player game upped to RMB 640 million in 2019, an increase of 341.4%, reflecting the flourishing development of Chinese single-player games. Another Chinese single-player games bestselling list for 2020 shows that two single-player video games, *Gunfire Reburn* and *Pascal's Wager*, had sold over one million copies, owing to the development of Chinese games in video games digital distribution services platforms like Steam and Wegame (Gamelook, 2021). In 2020, China Audio-video and Digital Publishing Association (CADPA, 2020) issued a report

showing that the actual marketing revenue of China's independently developed games in overseas markets was US\$15.450 billion, an increase of US\$3.855 billion over the previous year, maintaining high growth momentum. In terms of regional distribution, the US, Japan, and Korea are still the main markets for China's self-developed games, with combined revenue of 60.27% of the total overseas revenue, manifesting that overseas markets are significant for China's game development.

2. *Game Localization*

For a good localization can promote a game in different regions and lead to a spike in game sales, localization is the top priority before promoting the game globally. Game localization refers to the preparation of video games before they are released in new regions or countries, including modifying the game process, changes to the game content, new physical packaging, manuals, recording new audio, and modifying good content according to the censorship requirements, and most importantly, the translation of the game text. Game translation not just means to translate the text literally but to translate the culture of the source language into the target language. Chris Crawford (1982), a game designer, defined the game as "a rudimentary cultural form". In the backdrop of globalization, the game has become a new cultural form with the capacity to spread culture abroad. For some game players, it is Japanese games like *Dynasty Warriors* and *Romance of The Three Kingdoms* that introduce them to the historical figures of the Three Kingdoms of China (220–280). Despite China's long history and rich culture, these cultures have rarely been spread abroad successfully through Chinese games. With the increase of China's international influence, cultural communication, and media innovation, western gamers are attracted to oriental myths increasingly. It is not uncommon in some Chinese game discussion groups to see English-speaking gamers petitioning Chinese game developers to release the English versions. Therefore, as a game translator, one should be clear about the localization translation methods and strategies to translate culture.

3. *Game Titles Translation and Skopos Theory*

Game translation involves the translation of UI (User Interface), game dialogue text, plot subtitles, and so on. This paper mainly discusses the translation of Chinese single-player video game titles. The importance of the game title is mirrored in its entertainment value and commercial value. The former (the entertainment value) is to please the target players and show them the features and the culture of the game. The latter is to stimulate their desire to buy and gain commercial profits. It is both crucial and challenging to translate the game title well, as a proper translation boosts game selling, while a bad translation may discourage the game players from buying it.

Minako O'Hagan (2013:150), the Associate Professor at the School of Cultures Languages and Linguistics, suggests that the Skopos Theory should be the guiding theory of game translation because game translation is “primarily driven by its purpose (Skopos), which is ultimately to entertain the end-user of the translated product”. Skopos, a Greek word defined as “aim or purpose”, was introduced into translation theory and developed by Hans J. Vermeer in the late 1970s. The idea was then extended by some Skopos theorists, most notably, Christiane Nord. According to Nord (2018:12), in the framework of Skopos Theory, the communicative needs and the culture-specific world knowledge of the intended receiver are important factors that determine the purpose of a translation. When choosing a game, gamers expect to choose a game with a catchy title that captures their interest. A good game translation should have both entertainment value and commercial value to meet players' needs. After identifying the goals of the gamers, the question is how to apply the right translation strategy to guide the game title translation practice.

According to Reiss and Vermeer (1984:90), the paramount rule for any translation should be the Skopos rule which means “the end justifies the means”. It is expected to solve the existing dilemmas of domestication and foreignization. Nord (2018:28) claims that “the Skopos of a particular translation task may require a ‘free’ or a ‘faithful translation’, or anything between these two extremes, depending on the purpose for which translation is needed”. In other words, domestication and foreignization are suitable for translation strategies under Skopos Theory, and they can be applied in game translation.

4. Domestication and Foreignization

4.1 Domestication

Domestication is based and centered on the target language. It adopts target language expressions that the target language readers can understand, striving to enter the target language readers' world, attempting to convey the information intended by the source language text and make the translation vivid. The advantage is that it can make the target language readers understand the source language text without obstacles. Domestication is frequently used in the translation of game titles.

The examples thereafter are Chinese single-player video games released on the Steam platform. It is noted that the translations of these games have been officially used on the Steam platform, which means all of them are officially authorized translations.

Example 1

Original Version	English Version (Official Translation)
Xī Yóu Jì Zhī Dà Shèng guī Lái (西游记之大圣归来)	Monkey King: Hero Is Back
Zhǐ Rén (纸人)	Paper Dolls
Xiān Ji àn Q íXi áZhu àn (仙剑奇侠传)	Chinese Paladin: Sword and Fairy

Regarding the translation of game titles, Minako O'Hagan (2013:176) suggests using the strategy of substitution, where the original title is replaced with a reference analogous in the target culture, to achieve a similar effect on the target user. In Example 1, the official translator replaced the concepts in original versions with the corresponding ones in the target language and tried to achieve an equivalence effect on the target player. It is worth noting that only some of the English versions mentioned above are acceptable because the strategy of substitution was used correctly. “Zhǐ Rén (纸人)”, for example, literally means paper man in Chinese concerning different expressions for the same concept in different languages. Chinese people call this kind of paper man-shape toy paper man based on its material and appearance, while English speakers call it paper doll based on its material and usage. Besides, the image of paper man is a common element in Chinese horror movies and novels while foreign horror movies often use the doll as a creepy element. The translation of *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* also uses substitution. The translator replaced the original title “Dà Shèng (大圣)” in Chinese with “Monkey King” which is a more familiar title to the western players. Nevertheless, the translation of “Xī Yóu Jì Zhī Dà Shèng guī Lái (西游记之大圣归来)” is still debatable. Monkey king has other titles like Sun Wukong, which is more welcome in the western players because some popular games have characters named after it. Apart from it, the translation's subtitle, “Hero Is Back”, is clearly missing an article in front of it, making the sentence less coherent.

Errors such as misunderstandings or misuses of words also occurred in the official translation versions. As an SLG game (Simulation Game) of Chinese fantasy influenced by Chinese mythology, the translation of “Liǎo Bù Qǐ De Xiū Xiān Mó Nǐ Qì (了不起的修仙模拟器)” may be mistaken for a farming game because the word “cultivation” can not fully explain the meaning of “xiū xiān(修仙)” which means a mortal becomes a celestial being through supernatural training or practice in Chinese mythology. Even though some foreign players have accepted the word “cultivation” as the translation of “xiū xiān(修仙)”, the word “cultivation” usually refers to farming games in English games, which will give the wrong information to the target information player. Similar errors also can be found in “Xiān Jiàn Qí Xiá Zhuàn (仙剑奇侠传)” which mistakes the word “Paladin” for the equivalence of “xiá(侠)”. The translation of “Yù Jì àn (御剑)” is acceptable because even though it changes the part of speech in the original word, it still conveys the correct message to the target players.

Example 2

Original Version	English Version (Official Translation)
Guǐ Gǔ Bā Huāng (鬼谷八荒)	Tale of Immortal
Zǐ Sài Qiū Fēng (紫塞秋风)	The Wind Road
Shén Wǔ Huàn Xiǎng (神舞幻想)	Faith of Danschant
Pà Sī Kǎ Qì Yuē (帕斯卡契约)	Pascal's Wager

The famous American translation theorist Eugene Nida (2001), who advocates domestication, suggests that the reader of “a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of how the original readers of the text must have understood and appreciated it”. Domestication gives the reader a smooth reading experience as if reading a work in the native language. For the purpose of making the target player conceive the ideas of the original text, some images or concepts should be reformed in the target text. Therefore, it is acceptable to omit, add, or even create some concepts for the sake of coherence and expressiveness. The word “shén wǔ (神舞)”, for example, is translated as “danschant” which is a compound word created by the translator. Since the game’s genre is related to ritual dance, the innovative translation may bring a new perspective to the players.

4.2 Foreignization

Domestication and Foreignization are not the same as literal translation and free translation, in that domestication and foreignization extend the concepts of literal translation and free translation and elevate language to an aesthetic level. Lawrence Venuti (2004:20), a famous American translation theorist, introduced the pair of translation terms of domestication and foreignization and described the foreignization method as “an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad”.

Foreignization requires the translator to take the original text as the center so that the target language readers can experience the language characteristics, culture, exoticism, etc., of the source language. Simultaneously, the translation requires the target language readers to accept the unique features of the source language.

Today’s game industry is centered on the United States and Japan, which has drawn criticism from some scholars (Dongwon Jo, 2020). The long-term game culture domination of the United States and Japan has been drawing global gamers’ attention to these two countries, while the game culture in other countries are ignored due to their underdeveloped game industry. Consequently, most game players in China are more familiar with western game culture than westerners being familiar with Chinese game culture. Venuti (2004) argues that, “foreignization entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines that are excluded by dominant cultural values

in the target language”. His remarks further illustrate that the use of foreignization is feasible in game translation for Chinese culture is excluded by the dominant game culture in the target language.

Example 3

Original Version	English Version (Official Translation)
Gǔ Jiàn Qí Tán (古剑奇谭)	Gujian
Xuān Yuán Jiàn (轩辕剑)	Xuan Yuan Sword
Tài Wú Huì Juǎn (太吾绘卷)	The Scroll of Taiwu
Xiá Zhī Dào (侠之道)	Path of Wuxia
Dà Yǎn Jiāng Hú (大衍江湖)	Evolution of Jianghu
Jiàn Pò (剑魄)	JianPo

The examples of foreignization are also divided into two parts. In this part, the original versions all contain culture loaded words with oriental culture, such as “xiá (侠)” “pò (魄)” and “jiāng hú (江湖)”, which have no exact equivalences in the target language. In their English versions, they are all translated through pinyin transliteration. The advantage of this translation method is that it can lead the target language players to Chinese culture. As early as 2010, Oxford English Dictionary included the phrase “Wuxia” and defined the phrase as a genre of Chinese fiction or cinema featuring itinerant warriors of ancient China, often depicted as capable of superhuman feats of martial arts. Besides, Chinese phrases like “Guanxi” and “Add Oil” have been included in the dictionary. As Chinese phrases make it into Oxford English Dictionary, it reflects the increasing acceptance of Chinese culture in the English-speaking world.

However, as mentioned above, Chinese game culture is not the dominant culture yet. Some phrases like “gǔ jiàn (古剑)”, “tài wú (太吾)” or “jiàn pò (剑魄)” are not included in the western dictionaries. If the target language players do not know Chinese culture well enough or only pay cursory attention to the related themes, they cannot get any information from it. Therefore, using transliteration to translate a game’s title may confuse the player and discourage them from buying it. On top of that, some English-speaking players may have a hard time remembering the title of the game.

Example 4

Original Version	English Version (Official Translation)
Huī Jìn Zhī Guān (灰烬之棺)	Coffin of Ashes
Bō Xī Yà Shí guāng (波西亚时光)	My Time At Portia
Qiāng Huǒ Chóng Shēng (枪火重生)	Gunfire Reborn

Apart from video games based on Chinese mythology, many games made in China are of world-contents or settings related to western culture. In this case, it is easy to find the corresponding concepts or words in English. By adopting foreignization as the translation method, the English version is smooth and readable. It conveys the information in the original language and keeps its form of the original sentence.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Chinese game industry enjoys strong growth momentum. In order to maintain rapid development, Chinese game developers should concentrate on the overseas markets and the localization translation of games. A game title is the first impression of the game. Because of cultural differences and different language usages, translating Chinese game titles accurately and effectively into English is challenging for a Chinese translator. Based on Skopos Theory, game titles can be translated by means of domestication and foreignization according to the purposes of the addressee. Both domestication and foreignization are used with high frequency in the game title translation. Besides, it is important to note that the translator must take the pragmatic differences into consideration when they translate Chinese game titles into English.

References

- CHIC. (2020). China Game Industry Report 2020 (in Chinese) [2020 年中国游戏产业报告]. Retrieved from <http://www.cgigc.com.cn/gamedata/22132.html>
- Crawford, C. (1982). *The art of computer game design*.
- Gamelook. (2021). 2020 Chinese Single-player Games Annual Sales Ranking (in Chinese) [乘风破浪的国产单机游戏！2020 年度销量排行榜出炉]. Retrieved from <http://www.gamelook.com.cn/2021/01/412971>
- Gamma Data. (2019). 2019 China Game Industry Annual Report (in Chinese) [2019 中国游戏产业年度报告]. Retrieved from <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1653349541342415533&wfr=spider&for=p>
- Jo, D. (2020). 'Bursting Circuit Boards': Infrastructures and Technical Practices of Copying in Early Korean Video Game Industry. *Game Studies*, 20(2).
- Limelight. (2020). The State of Online Gaming 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.limelight.com/resources/white-paper/state-of-online-gaming-2020/>
- Nida, E. A. (2001). *Language and culture: Contexts in translating*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Nord, C. (2018). *Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained*. Routledge.
- O'Hagan, M., & Mangiron, C. (2013). *Game Localization: Translating for the global digital entertainment industry* (Vol. 106). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Reiss, K., & Vermeer, H. J. (1984). *Groundwork for a general theory of translation*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Venuti, L. (2004). *The Translator's Invisibility*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Shanghai.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

The Editorial Team of CABTI

Editor-in-Chief:

Dr. Zhengguo He, PhD in Translation Studies from Newcastle University, Medical Interpreter at Voyce Global, USA

Editorial Board:

Junchao WANG, Journal Editor, PhD in Translation Studies and Master's in Business English Studies (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies).

Mark JAMES, Associate Professor (Columbus State University), expert in International Business Communication and Cross Cultural Management and Investments.

Joe BANKS, Juris Doctor in law (Ohio Northern University), Chair, Board of Directors, BPNE Ltd, Newcastle upon Tyne School Governors expert in cross-cultural education.

Zhaofeng JIANG, Professor (Nanning Normal University), MA (University of Worcester, UK), translator and interpreter for China -ASEAN Expo, expert in intercultural communication.

Xinliang JIANG, PhD in linguistics (Newcastle University), Lecturer at Toronto University, Canada

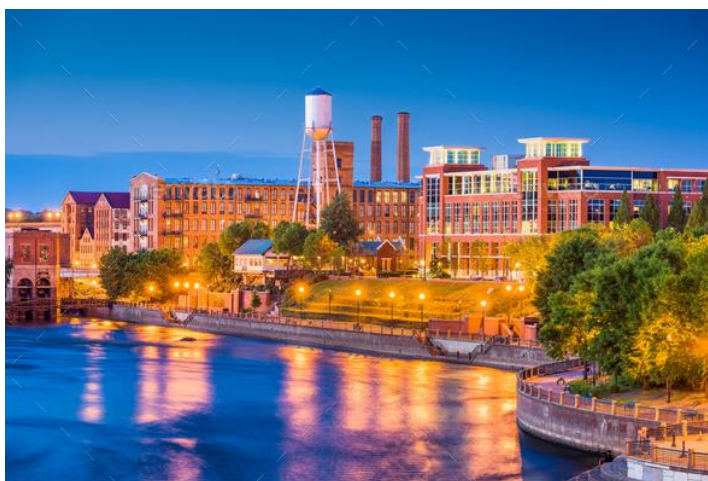
Suihong GUO, professor, master's dissertation supervisor, dean of the School of Foreign Languages of Guangdong Ocean University (2021), executive director of Guangdong Translation Association

JHK Press

2840 Warm Springs Rd

Columbus, GA 31904 USA

General inquiry: jackhawk@jhkpress.com



Columbus, GA