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CABTI

Vol. 02, Issue 03

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# Research into the Subtitling of *Song of the Phoenix* from the Perspective of Manipulation Theory (Template)

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## Abstract

André Lefevere’s theory of manipulation emphasizes the close relationship between translation and social culture, arguing that translation is rewriting and rewriting is manipulation. Rewriting treats translations as created or projected images of the original source texts, representing a far more dynamic implementation of translation theory. As one of the most frequent manifestations of global communication today, audiovisual translation (AVT) is able to overcome language barriers when spreading culture around the world. Of the several modes available to translate audiovisual programs, subtitling, grown in visibility and significance, has evolved into a prominent and prolific field of study, with many more scholars devoting to the analysis of audiovisual programs in recent years. This paper takes the subtitle translation of *Song of the Phoenix*, a cinema with strong Chinese characteristics, as an example to explore the embodiment of Lefevere’s three elements of manipulation in cinema subtitling. It is found that, under the manipulation of such extra-textual factors as ideology, poetics, and patronage, translators will flexibly adopt certain rewriting devices in subtitle translation to transcend ideological and poetic differences and cater to the patronage’s requirements so as to achieve the translation purpose.

**Key Words**: Audiovisual Translation, subtitling, *Song of the Phoenix,* manipulation theory, rewriting

## 1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the booming social networks as well as streaming platforms, audiovisual works have become a prominent representative of communication in the digital world. Audiovisual productions have become carriers of cultures and languages worldwide due to their ease of dissemination, which in turn has propelled audiovisual translation (AVT) to one of the most predominant translation practices of the 21st century. Movies, like literature and other creative arts, can bring different cultures closer or alienate them. With the potential to reach a wider audience, cinema has a more significant cultural effect than other artistic practices (Kuo, 2018). And yet, in the existing literature, little attention has been paid to the possible role of translation in the internationalization of Chinese audiovisual productions, with most attention focused on such broader issues as the whole film and TV industry (Keane, 2015), the successes in the box office of Chinese works abroad, and the socio-cultural and political implications of such cross-border exchanges (Su, 2016; Keane, 2019; Rosen, 2020).

*Song of the Phoenix*, a literary film directed by Tianming Wu and starring Zeru Tao and Wei Zheng, was released in 2016 in Mainland China. The film, adapted from Jianghong Xiao’s novella of the same name, tells the story of the decline of suona, a traditional Chinese folk-art form, in the context of Western culture’s impact and China’s changing times. In the film, suona represents not only the skills but also the rules and beliefs upheld by generations. The film shows the perseverance of two generations of suona craftsmen, Master Jiao and Tianming You, who endeavor to find a way for folk culture and make every effort to preserve the excellent traditional Chinese culture. The film won the Special Jury Prize and several nominations for the 29th Golden Rooster Award, the Best Feature Film Award at the 1st Silk Road International Film Festival, and the Audience Favorite Film Award at the Tours Film Festival in France. Beyond that, the film became the official screening film of some international film festivals and received rave reviews everywhere it has been screened. Yimou Zhang, Ke Xu and other famous directors in China have voiced their support. Martin Ssecko, director of the Academy Award, praised Tianming Wu as a true giant in the film industry.

With the deepening of cultural exchanges between China and the West, foreign films are constantly pouring into China while domestic films are further going to the international market. In this context, the translation of film subtitles means a lot. For an excellent movie to reach the global market, it must ensure that the recipients of the target language can accurately understand the film’s language through English subtitles as well as the images. As a film with strong Chinese characteristics and local flavor, *Song of the Phoenix* contributes significantly to the inheritance and transmission of Chinese culture. A proper translation can effectively promote the dissemination and development of traditional Chinese culture.

Table 1. Top 10 countries in terms of cognitive translation (2012-2021)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rank | Publications | Centrality | Countries |
| 1 | 521 | 0.06 | USA |
| 2 | 204 | 0.12 | England |
| 3 | 176 | 0.00 | Canada |
| 4 | 148 | 0.09 | Australia |
| 5 | 122 | 0.10 | Peoples R China |
| 6 | 121 | 0.03 | Germany |
| 7 | 119 | 0.25 | Spain |
| 8 | 113 | 0.03 | Netherlands |
| 9 | 62 | 0.05 | Italy |
| 10 | 60 | 0.29 | Sweden |

According to Lefevere, translation is the rewriting of the source text, rewriting is manipulation, and all translations are the result of manipulation. Ideology, poetics, and patronage are the three primary factors that manipulate translation, and any translation is inevitably influenced by these factors. The translation of the subtitles of *Song of the Phoenix* is no exception. Due to the influence of these three factors, the translator has to adopt appropriate translation strategies to achieve the translation goals successfully.

Description: Place table caption in front of table body and description below the table body. Avoid vertical rules. Be sparing in the use of tables and ensure that the data presented in tables do not duplicate results described elsewhere in the article.

Figure 1. Figure title (This is an example of figure 1)

Description: Number figures consecutively in accordance with their appearance in the text. Place figures caption and description below the figure body (Resolution: 300 dpi).

Translation example 1.

Source text: 这是一个示例文本。/ هذا نص عينة.

Source text Romanized: Zhè shì shìlì wénběn. /hadha nas eaynatan.

Target text: This is sample text.

(Omitted)

## 4. Results and Discussion

In the Results section, summarize the collected data and the analysis performed on those data relevant to the discourse that is to follow. Report the data in sufficient detail to justify your conclusions. Mention all relevant results, including those that run counter to expectation; be sure to include small effect sizes (or statistically no significant findings) when theory predicts large (or statistically significant) ones. Do not hide uncomfortable results by omission. Do not include individual scores or raw data with the exception, f or example, of single-case designs or illustrative examples. In the spirit of data sharing (encouraged by APA and other professional associations and sometimes required by funding agencies), raw data, including study characteristics and individual effect sizes used in a meta -analysis, can be made available on supplemental online archives.

### 4.1 Recruitment

Provide dates defining the periods of recruitment and follow-up and the primary sources of the potential subjects, where appropriate. If these dates differ by group, provide the values for each group.

(Omitted)

### 4.6 Baseline Data

Be sure that baseline demographic and/or clinical characteristics of each group are provided.

#### 4.6.1 Statistics and Data Analysis

In studies reporting the results of experimental manipulations or interventions, clarify whether the analysis was by intent-ta-treat. That is, were all participants assigned to conditions included in the data analysis regardless of whether they actually received the intervention, or were only participants who completed the intervention satisfactorily included? Give a rationale for the choice.

#### 4.6.2 Adverse Events

If interventions were studied, detail all important adverse events (events with serious consequences) and/or side effects in each intervention group.

## 5. Conclusion

As well as unleashing great potential in promoting Chinese culture to the world and strengthening the country’s soft power, audiovisual translation could be employed as a tool to promote foreign trade in creative industries and increase economic returns. Based on André Lefevere’s manipulation theory, this paper probes into the manifestation of manipulative factors in the English translation of the subtitles of *Song of the Phoenix* as well as the translators’ flexible strategies of translation in response to these manipulative factors. Through the analysis, it is found that the translator is also influenced and manipulated by ideology, poetics and patronage in the translation process. Under the influence of these manipulative factors, translators will inevitably take the initiative to rewrite the original text properly in order to avoid ideological conflicts, to meet the mainstream poetics, and to uphold the will of the patronage, so as to achieve the desired translation goal smoothly.

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Use the **[APA](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/documents/APA%207%20-%20Professional%20Sample%20Paper%20-%202020.pdf)** [referencing style](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/documents/APA%207%20-%20Professional%20Sample%20Paper%20-%202020.pdf)

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**Bad examples, not acceptable (non-English citations should be translated into English, and presented in both Chinese and English)**:

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