Translating Humour Using Subtitles (Chinese to English)

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the way in which humour in Chinese comedies is transferred for English-speaking audiences. It employs multimodality as a concept to underline that to privilege only linguistic approaches to subtitling is to ignore the way in which verbal and non-verbal modes interplay in the generation of humour. The corpus under examination contains four Chinese comedies from different genres: the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008), the chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (2011), and the martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt* (2015). These are used as case studies to investigate the linguistic and cultural barriers inherent in the subtitling of Chinese humour into English. This thesis analyses different types of humour in the original Chinese and their transposition into English subtitles through the prism of multimodality to underline the complex interaction of different semiotic modes in the generation of laughter. This thesis demonstrates that verbally expressed humour and cultural humour tend to travel badly by comparison with non-verbal modes. Non-verbal modes, to a certain degree, however, can compensate for the loss of linguistic or cultural humour. Moreover, on the basis of the case studies of these four Chinese comedies, this thesis works to offer a more precise classification of audiovisual humour. This work highlights that the analysis of humour in this context cannot be limited to linguistic evaluations of subtitles like those in the case studies. Films are multimodal texts, and subtitling humour is a multimodal activity in which verbal and non-verbal modes combine to trigger comic effects. Multimodality is key to understanding the translation strategies which enable the transposition of humour from Chinese into English. This study unpicks the complex ways in which Chinese humour and culture are rendered for English-speaking audiences and argues powerfully that multimodality is a key framework for further studies of subtitling.

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Abbreviations

AVT – audiovisual translation

BBFC – British Board of Film Classification

CCTV – China Central Television

CNKI – China National Knowledge Infrastructure

CPC – Communist Party of China

GTVH – General Theory of Verbal Humour

KMT – Kuomintang

MDA – multimodal discourse analysis

MIA – multimodal interactional analysis

PRC – People's Republic of China

RCSC – Red Cross Society of China

SAPPRFT – State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television

SARFT – State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television

SFG – systemic functional grammar

SL – source language

TL – target language

VEH – verbally expressed humour

Chapter 1 Introduction

This study considers the transfer of humour from Mandarin Chinese to English. China is a key case study in this area for multiple reasons. Not only did China become the second largest economy in the world in 2010 (Barboza 2010); the country's rise to global economic power has also increased its cultural power, leading to a larger market for Chinese films around the globe. China is now the second largest film market by number of tickets sold (after India), while the English-speaking world accounts for the highest share of box-office revenue by far.[1] If we also take into account the massive number of people around the globe who speak English as a second or additional language, it is clear that English is the key language for the export of Chinese films through different distribution channels. The export of American films and TV series to China has received considerable critical attention (Qian 2004, pp.56–57). The export of Chinese works to a global anglophone market, however, has received far less critical attention. This thesis aims to rectify that critical blind spot. China is one of the biggest exporters of physical goods in the world,[2] and the movement of Chinese goods has been the object of academic study. However, China is also increasingly pushing to export its culture to the world as the huge rise in Chinese subtitled films for the anglophone market indicates. This thesis unpicks the export of Chinese culture in the form of subtitled films and specifically the humour they seek to convey within specific comedic genres. Though this phenomenon of cultural export in filmic form is not reserved to China, China forms a key and intriguing case study both in terms of the number and complexity of the films on offer.

In a global context, subtitling humour has become progressively more visible as a research topic, and numerous studies have been carried out from different perspectives to discuss the difficulties involved in subtitling humour (Asimakoulas 2004, Bucaria 2005, Rossato and Chiaro 2010). However, their discussions of the difficulties and translation strategies in subtitling humour are based on the European context. The Chinese case studies examined in this thesis test and further their findings. Chinese is very different from the more commonly discussed European languages and cultures. As Chiaro (2010b, p.1) observes, geographical boundaries,

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[1] In terms of box-office revenue, China looks set to take the number one spot largest market for film in a global context (Grimm 2015, p.159).

[2] According to the *Financial Times*, China overtook the US for the first time and became the world's biggest trader in goods in 2013 (Anderlini and Hornby 2014).

as well as linguistic and cultural differences, can weaken humour in translation. Detailed study of humour translation in Chinese comedies is thus important and offers a core contribution to the critical landscape of AVT.

Comedy serves as a bridge to connect different countries and cultures via the subtitling process. Subtitling is the principal form of AVT used when Chinese films are exported for English-speaking audiences. Qian points out that "Chinese films that are exported or entered in international film festivals are always subtitled in English, but never dubbed" (2009, p.18). In recent years, China has worked to promote its cultural influence and soft power at an international level by exporting its films all over the world. The commercial success of recent comic Chinese films suggests that comedies are particularly effective in this mission. [3] According to *The Wall Street Journal China*, "The success of the comedy *Lost in Thailand* (2012) has shaken up the landscape of the movie industry in China, where big-budget historical epics and martial arts and action films often dominate the box office" (Napolitano 2013). However, transferring Chinese humour to English-speaking audiences abroad is, as this thesis shows, no easy feat. Humour in Chinese comedies often depends heavily on China's national customs, social values and historical allusions, all of which tend to be particularly difficult to translate within the constraints of subtitles.

Within the body of Chinese films that are exported, comedy offers a particularly compelling case study. A hugely successful and diverse genre in their domestic market, Chinese comedies offer a rich and nuanced body from which to select case studies. Humour is something of a universal for humans, offering a unique method of communication between people which can shorten the distance between countries and cultures. Yet the huge linguistic and cultural differences between China and English-speaking countries make the transfer of humour challenging in ways that demand detailed attention and systematic analysis. The interlingual subtitling of comedies, a translation practice that is severely constrained by spatial and temporal factors, is in and of itself a complex task. Chiaro (2009a, p.162) has rightly pointed out that humour on-screen poses a myriad of challenges for translators when visuals and

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[3] On New Year's Day 2014, China's president, Xi Jinping, published an article in China's state newspaper *People's Daily* arguing that the country needed to promote its soft power and build its image abroad (Swanson 2016).

vocals coalesce. As this thesis will make clear, it is particularly complex in a Chinese to English context. Employing multimodal analysis, which explores the multiple semiotic levels on which subtitles work in a Chinese/English context, this thesis will cut to the heart of the power of its case studies.[4]

This introduction begins by looking at current research on subtitling humour, with particular emphasis on the importance, value, complexities and challenges of subtitling humour in Chinese comedies. It then sets out the research questions and methodology for this study. The thesis structure and content are subsequently outlined. The introduction then concludes with a consideration of the research gaps this study fills and the contribution to knowledge of this thesis.

1.1　Research background

This section starts with an overview of the critical literature on the subtitling of humour in China. The relevant data, which has been collected from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, demonstrates the trends in this domain in order to provide a thorough understanding of the critical context of this thesis.[5] The figures that follow present an overview of the studies on subtitling, subtitling humour, translation studies and their relationships over a span of eleven years (2008-2018) in China. Little research has been conducted on the relationship between subtitling, humour and Chinese films in the past eleven years (see Figure 1.3).[6] Therefore, I have decided to focus on the period of 2008-2018 in order to fill this critical gap. Table 1.1 shows that studies on subtitling occupied a marginal position within the field of translation studies in the relevant period. The total number of

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[4] "The power" of case studies means that the subtitles are especially effective in transferring particular instances of Chinese humour to English-speaking audiences.

[5] CNKI is China's key database storing academic journals, doctoral and master's dissertations, and research papers.

[6] Apart from the data collected from CNKI, I also consulted other sources such as TSB (Translation Studies Bibliography) and Google Scholar. They provide similar results to CNKI. Specifically, according to TSB, there are 10 research outputs focusing on subtitling in the Chinese context, yet none of them concern subtitling of humour in China. Google Scholar suggests that over 1500 research articles address the relationship between subtitling, humour and films. However, most of these studies tend to focus on subtitling of humour from English to Chinese (e.g. Yau 2010, Wu 2010, Wang 2014, Cai 2015, Liang 2018). Research topics such as humour transfer in the form of subtitles in Chinese films have not received much scholarly attention (e.g. Kim 2007, Yuan 2016, Yuan 2016).

research pieces on subtitling accounts for less than 3% of all research outputs in translation studies during that time (see Figure 1.1).

Year / Content	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Number of studies on subtitling	109	132	194	262	363	469	501	468	493	485	293	3767
Number of Studies in translation studies	8576	9151	10152	11814	13460	14240	15706	13359	15870	15980	9282	137590
Percentage of studies on subtitling in translation studies	1.27%	1.44%	1.91%	2.22%	2.70%	3.29%	3.19%	3.50%	3.11%	3.04%	3.16%	2.67%

Table 1.1 Number of studies on subtitling and translation studies and their relationship
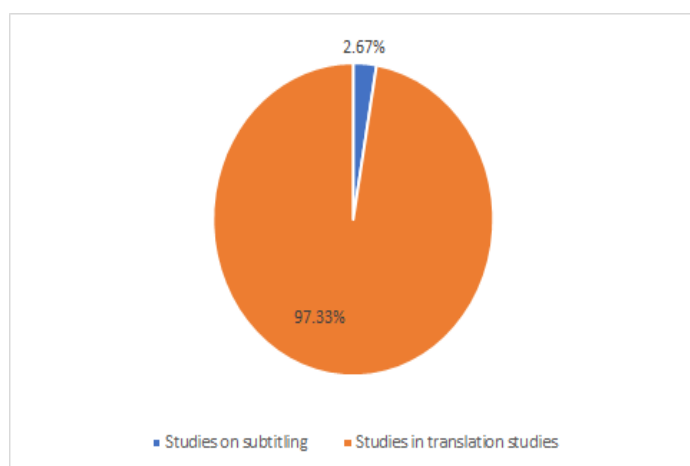
Figure 1.1 Total percentage of studies on subtitling in translation studies

In Figure 1.2, it is notable that subtitling was a completely neglected area prior to 2000, with only one article discussing this issue. In the new millennium, more attention has been paid to subtitling, and research articles about the subject saw a sharp increase from 2010 onwards. Studies in this area reached their peak in 2014 with 501 items of research. This peak may be explained by the growing preference among Chinese viewers for subtitles rather than the

traditional form of translation (dubbing), and the improvement of Chinese audiences' English language skills. Subtitling replaced dubbing and has become the preferred audiovisual translation (AVT) modality in China (Wang D. 2014, p.267, Jin 2018, p.199). It might be argued that this is thanks in part to the rapid development of amateur subtitling. The rise of 'fansubbing' between 2003 and 2005 challenged the dubbing industry. A large number of fansubbing groups translated and offered Chinese viewers open access to the latest international TV series and films (Wang and Zhang 2015, p.176, Wang and Zhang 2017, pp.306–307, Jin 2018, p.198).[7] The increasing English language proficiency of Chinese viewers has enabled them to embrace this influx of subtitled versions which invite them to engage fully with the film or television production as they can "listen to the original dialogue and enjoy the entire performance" (Wang and Zhang 2015, p.176).
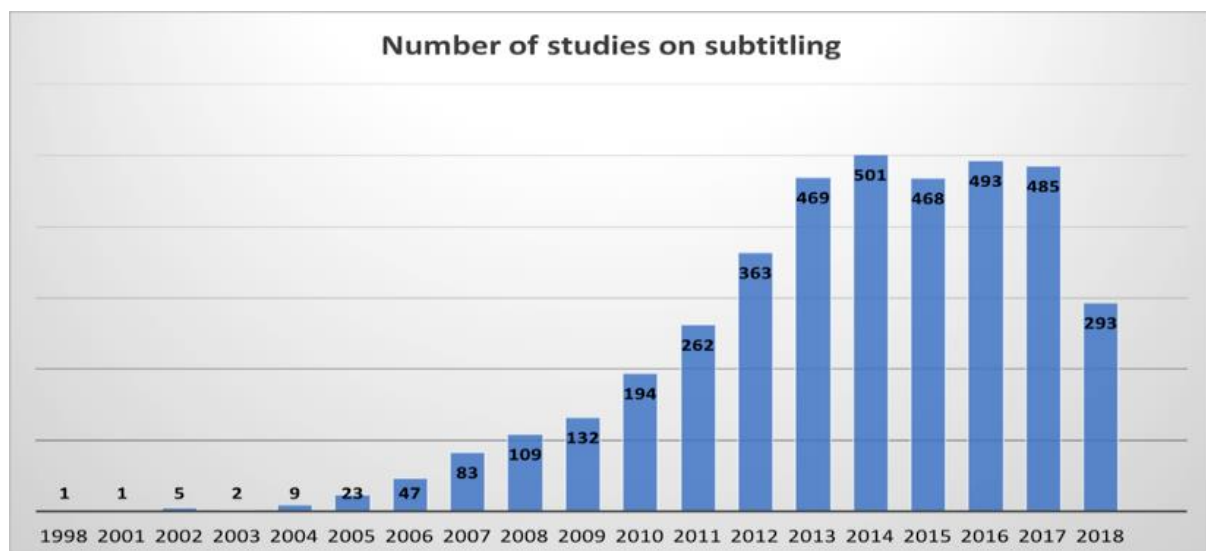
Figure 1.2 Studies on subtitling in China

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[7] In comparison to subtitling, dubbing is a complex activity which is costly and time-consuming (Díaz-Cintas and Orero 2010, p.442). The rise of fansubbing (in the form of groups such as YYsTs, TDY, Fr 1000, Shengcheng and i. Kamigami) in China between 2003 and 2005 was aided by "nation-wide access to Web 2.0., different peer-to-peer file-sharing protocols (e.g. bit-torrent) and user-friendly downloading programmes (e.g. Thunder 迅雷)" (Wang and Zhang 2017, p.306).
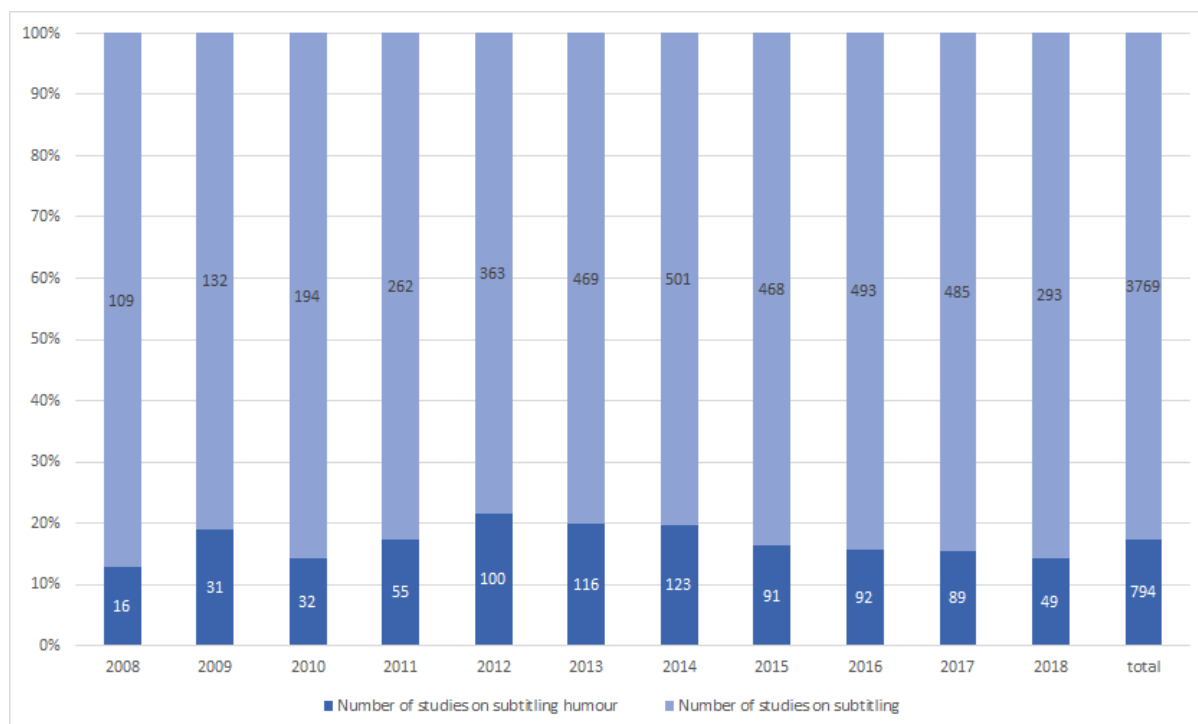
Figure 1.3 Number of studies on subtitling and subtitling humour in China

Figure 1.3 shows the relationship between studies on subtitling humour and those on subtitling as a whole from 2008 to 2018. The period from 2008 to 2013 witnessed stable growth in the number of studies on subtitling humour. A dramatic increase of interest in subtitling humour was seen from 2011 to 2012, with the number of research articles rising to 100. In 2014, research interest in subtitling humour reached its peak, with a total of 123 studies. However, in 2015, the number of studies on subtitling humour dropped to 91, and the total number then remained relatively stable around this level until 2017. Despite the fact that subtitling humour has received more attention in China over the past ten years, relative to other areas of translation, it can still be considered a neglected area within the field of AVT, only accounting for roughly 20% of all studies on subtitling.

Not only are the existing pieces of research on subtitling humour in China far from numerous, those which do exist tend to focus on imported audiovisual products, such as American sitcoms and British comedies (Dong 2010, Shen 2017). Limited research has been carried out on AVT from Chinese into English. To the best of my knowledge, no previous studies on subtitling humour offer a thorough analysis of different genres of Chinese comedy, with a focus on how humour in Chinese comedies has been translated into English, how different

semiotic modes interact with one another to contribute to the generation of humour, and the subtitler's choice of translation strategies in dealing with humour.

This thesis considers the challenges involved in humour transfer in four Chinese comedies from different genres: the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008), the chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010) and the martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt* (2015). This diversity of genres in the case studies allows me to unpick the complex range of translational strategies at play within the context of the subtitling of humour.

The translation of linguistic elements in films has been a recurring topic of study in AVT. However, a number of issues in relation to non-verbal information and subtitling are yet to be addressed. Research in this area deserves scholarly attention. Chuang (2006) is among the limited number of scholars who discuss the concept of non-verbal modes (moving images, sound effects, music) in audiovisual products and how these modes work with the verbal mode affecting the subtitler's choice of strategy in the subtitling process. She argues that subtitle translation is a multimodal activity in which different semiotic modes interact with each other in the meaning-making process. To produce the equivalent effect between the SL and TL, subtitlers need to treat non-verbal modes equally with verbal modes as an essential part in translating film texts. In comparison with Chuang (2006), Ortega (2011) explains and broadens the concept of non-verbal modes, defining them as paralanguage, kinesics, proxemics and cultural signs. In her studies of subtitling and the relevance of non-verbal information in polyglot films, Ortega (2011) explores the adoption of a multimodal approach to facilitate the understanding of multicultural and multilingual issues in audiovisual texts. By employing Vanoye's distinction of "horizontal and vertical dimensions of artefactual conversation", she explores the function of non-verbal elements (paralanguage, kinesics, proxemics and cultural signs) and how they are used in the polyglot film *Spanglish* (Ortega 2011, p.20). Ortega's study highlights the importance of non-verbal signs embedded in the visual and the acoustic channels in understanding film texts and calls for a multimodal approach to AVT. Sala-Robert (2016) demonstrates that non-verbal elements (sound effects, paralinguistic features and music) cannot be overlooked in the understanding of the subtitles for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH). Deriving inspiration from multilingual comic

conventions, the author suggests that presenting the non-verbal information visually enables children with hearing and visual impairment to grasp effectively the meaning of the subtitles.

All the above-mentioned studies are proof that the creation and analysis of subtitles in AVT cannot be detached from the film medium's inherent multimodality. The linguistic information in subtitles exists alongside non-verbal modes in the meaning-making process. The subtitler can employ different translation strategies depending on his/her understanding of the interplay of different modes. Pinto points out that "Audiovisual products are multimodal products in which speech is only one among other modes contributing to the overall message of the film" (2018, p.30). Over recent years, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on translating audiovisual humour. However, this research has focused largely on the linguistic dimension of the subtitling process (Luque 2003, Zabalbeascoa 2005, Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007, Chiaro 2010b). Very few studies have examined extralinguistic elements, such as non-verbal modes, which play an essential part in the overall comic effects achieved by the humour transfer process. Some scholars have pointed out that special attention needs to be paid to this neglected area in the field of AVT (Gambier 2006, 2008, Pérez-González 2014a). According to Gambier, "There is a strong paradox: we are ready to acknowledge the interrelations between the verbal and the visual, between language and non-verbal, but the dominant research perspective remains largely linguistic" (2006, p.6). Consequently, this thesis answers Gambier's call by employing the concept of multimodality in relation to the subtitling of Chinese films. This study does not confine itself to a linguistic discussion of subtitling humour. Instead, it considers the interrelationship of verbal and non-verbal modes as constitutive of the complexities of the transfer of humour in Chinese comedies into English via subtitles. It examines the translation strategies used within the multimodal filmic context in an attempt to fill the research gap outlined above by analysing films in its case studies that bridge gaps in humour and culture between their source and target cultures.

1.2   Research questions

Located at the intersection between translation studies, multimodality and humour studies, this thesis examines how Chinese humour is transferred to English-speaking audiences in four

case studies drawn from different genres of Chinese comedy films. The project uses the officially released DVDs of these comedies. Its central research questions are as follows:

1) **Given the particular constraints involved in subtitling and the linguistic and cultural barriers between China and English-speaking countries, how does Chinese humour transfer into English in subtitled films?**

2) **If we understand humour in film as a complex multimodal phenomenon, how do different modes (the verbal mode and non-verbal modes) interact to evoke laughter, and how is this interplay transposed in the subtitles from the source language (SL) of Mandarin Chinese to the target language (TL) of English?**

3) **To what extent do translators' strategies in rendering different types of humour affect the transfer of humour?**

1.3   Data collection and methodology

Establishing what data was available constituted a crucial first step for this study. In order to obtain a comprehensive picture of relevant film releases, a thorough survey of Chinese films subtitled for the anglophone market was conducted. This drew primarily on the output of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), but also used information from other sources, namely e-commerce platforms Amazon US and UK, as well as Amazon-owned IMDb and the Chinese fan-based online platform Douban Film. As can be seen in the table of Chinese comedies exported to English-speaking countries,[8] over a span of twenty-seven years (1992-2018), almost sixty-five of these films were exported to English-speaking countries. The years up to 2000 account for only three of these comedies, none of which appear to be available on DVD. From the remaining films produced after 2000, four Chinese movies from different comedy genres were selected as case studies: the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008),[9]

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[8] A table containing key production details of sixty-five Chinese comedies that were exported to anglophone countries can be found in Appendix 2.

[9] The DVD of *If You Are the One* (2008) was distributed by Huayi Brothers Media Corporation/Media Asia Films (BVI).

the chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013),[10] the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010),[11] and the martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt* (2015).[12] The release dates of these films correspond with a period when China's management of its soft power was particularly important against the backdrop of strong economic growth and considerable social change linked to globalisation. It is therefore no coincidence that the films considered in the case studies touch upon a number of contemporary social issues, such as illegitimate children being born abroad, questions of fairness in society, and the appeal for equality between men and women.

The rationale underlying the selection of these four Chinese comedies as primary sources is based on several factors. Firstly, their box-office success in China shows that the films resonated with the Chinese mainstream audience's expectations of comedy;[13] it is therefore reasonable to assume that the humour in these films is representative of contemporary trends in Chinese comedies. Secondly, choosing films from four different popular comedy genres provides additional assurance that the case studies are representative of the variety of comedy movies being produced in China. From the perspective of AVT, the case studies collectively offer a detailed vision of the challenges and multi-layered strategies involved in transposing Chinese humour for English-speaking audiences. Thirdly, arguably as a consequence of their box-office success in China, the films selected are available on DVD with both English and Chinese subtitles.[14] This thesis only considers officially released DVDs and their approved subtitles, not because they represent the only way to access these films – I recognise that these films have travelled the world in authorised and non-authorised forms, being consumed in different ways on different platforms – but because the DVDs offer a fixed, verifiable source which readers of this thesis can access.

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[10] The DVD of *Finding Mr. Right* (2013) was marketed and distributed by EDKO Films Ltd.

[11] Emperor Motion Picture (International) Ltd. and Beijing Buyilehu Film and Culture Ltd. oversaw the distribution of the DVD of *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010) abroad.

[12] FilmRise was the firm authorised to distribute the DVD of *Monster Hunt* (2015).

[13] *Monster Hunt* (2015) became a box-office hit in 2015 (BBC News 2015c), *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010) set a box-office record in China (Landreth 2011), *Finding Mr. Right* (2013) triumphed over other films in 2013 (Kerr 2013), *If You Are the One* (2008) became the second biggest Chinese language film in Chinese film history (Yu 2009). *Monster Hunt* (2015) won the Huabiao Awards, *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010) won the Asian Film Awards, *Finding Mr. Right* (2013) and *If You Are the One* (2008) were nominated for Hundred Flowers Awards.

[14] Each of these films was also fansubbed. However, the translations were of higher quality, more accurate, effective and appropriate on the officially released DVDs. For this reason, these DVDs were selected as the corpus for this study.

Multiple types of humour are evident both within individual films and across the different genres, and it is precisely such multiplicity and interconnections which this thesis seeks to analyse. Different types of humour overlap and intersect, producing cumulative effects which cannot be captured in isolation. Rather than structuring the thesis by humour type, I therefore took the decision to use the comedy film genre as a launch pad to consider the often overlapping interrelationships of different types of humour in contemporary Chinese film, and to structure this thesis by film genre. However, I do not seek to make generalisations about how humour works in the specific genres studied. Rather, it is my contention that humour types are not constrained by genre but instead cross genre boundaries in complex and fluid ways. In other words, there is no hard and fast link between a specific film genre and a specific type of humour. Collectively, the case studies illustrate the nature of the challenge the subtitler faces as he/she reworks comedy for a new national context/language. For AVT, this means that the subtitler must be proficient in rendering all types of humour in their interconnectedness.

In light of the increasingly global nature of internet-based distribution of films, the fact that a DVD has been released in a specific country or for a specific region is not a reliable indicator of the audience it reaches. I am therefore not claiming to discuss a specific audience beyond the fact that, by definition, viewers of Chinese comedies subtitled in English can be assumed to have a certain level of English language competence. Nor do I focus on specific subtitlers. While subtitlers are in some cases identified on the DVDs of my case study films in the credits, the nature and extent of their contribution is not clearly quantified (see Appendix 1). My research thus focuses solely on the on-screen output of subtitles as the visible manifestation of subtitlers' work, in relation to its multimodal context.[15]

Following transcription of the film dialogue, all instances of humour in each film were logged in a spreadsheet and classified according to relevant existing taxonomies.[16] Specifically, instances of humour were provisionally grouped using the following categories: Chiaro's

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[15] Accordingly, individual subtitlers or subtitling companies are not part of the focus of this thesis.
[16] As the procedure of selecting and grouping instances of humour is the same across all four case studies, the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008) is given as an example in Appendix 3 to illustrate the collection and classification of raw data in the spreadsheet.

(2010b) verbally expressed humour (VEH), including its subcategory cultural humour, Zabalbeascoa (1996) and Martínez-Sierra's (2006) non-verbal humour, and Zabalbeascoa's (1996) complex humour. These were employed as a starting point to ensure a coherent discussion of the complexities of the translation of humour in subtitles. From this corpus of instances of humour, strong specific examples were selected for detailed analysis and discussion, based on their range and diversity, to ensure that the full breadth of humour types and their interplay were considered for each film.

Because humour in the filmic text is often multimodal, this study pays special attention to multimodality, using the concept to examine the interplay of different modes in eliciting humour. To explore exactly how different modes interact in the construction of humour, this thesis presents screenshots from relevant moments of each film to capture different non-verbal modes (e.g. the kinesic mode, the visual mode) and examines how they collaborate with the verbal mode to generate humour in the complex subtitling process.

The exploration of the complexity of humour transfer follows the same pattern in each case study. First, I provide the rationale behind the selection of the film, then I outline the context of the film before analysing a range of examples drawn from the spreadsheet mentioned previously.

1.4   Overview of the theoretical framework: multimodality

This section focuses on the theoretical framework of multimodality employed in this thesis.

Multimodality refers to "The diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both *co-deployed* and *co-contextualised* in the making of a text-specific meaning" (Baldry and Thibault 2006 p.21). In film, meaning is generated via a combination of different modes (verbal mode and non-verbal modes) which interrelate. Multimodality is thus of paramount importance in investigating the subtitling of humour. It is a vital concept for two reasons. Firstly, although at first glance subtitles may appear to be singular in their modality – written words on a screen – on closer inspection it is clear that they cannot be considered to be separate from a film's other modes, because subtitles interact not only with the images

on-screen, but also with the sounds and dialogue, and multiple other factors in a film's screening and consumption. Subtitles are therefore an integral part of a multimodal product. Secondly, the multimodality of the subtitling process resonates with the multimodality of humour itself. Humour is a universal and defining facet of the human experience, but it is multimodal in its incarnations, varying hugely according to time, context, nation, medium and person. Humour derives from the multimodal nature of an audiovisual text in that various semiotic modes (e.g. language, gestures, music) interact with each other to create humour as part of the meaning-making process. In other words, humour is engendered by the combined effect of different modes (verbal and non-verbal) through their interaction in the acoustic and visual channels of communication. This thesis seeks to unpick the challenges of multimodality in both the subtitling process and the original humour at play in these Chinese films.

1.5   Thesis structure and content

The thesis consists of seven chapters.

Following this introduction, **Chapter 2** offers a review of academic literature relevant to this study. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework of multimodality and its relevance for the study of subtitling and the classification of Chinese humour. In this chapter, four different research areas pertaining to the translation of humour are highlighted and reviewed. The first area concerns the theoretical approaches to humour within the field of humour studies and translation studies. Among these approaches, this study pays particular attention to theories of incongruity, theories of superiority, and theories of release. The second area discussed in the literature review is research on humour in Chinese culture and film. The third research area reviewed is the subtitling of humour in China. The fourth area reviewed is research into multimodality and its relevance in AVT. From this basis of existing research, Chapter 2 goes on to present the theoretical framework constructed for this study. It outlines how this thesis adds to the knowledge in this research field by using a multimodal analysis to examine the interplay of the verbal mode and non-verbal modes in order to elucidate the transfer of Chinese humour through English subtitles.

Chapter 3 analyses the subtitling of humour in the Chinese romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008). The chapter starts with a discussion of the context of this film in China and anglophone countries at the time of its initial release, the film's plot and the criteria for its selection as a case study. The chapter explains the genesis of romantic comedies as a genre in China. It goes on to explore the complexities of transferring verbal humour, Chinese cultural humour and heterogeneous complex humour via the English subtitles. It investigates how humour is translated and how the social issues specific to China, most notably the phenomenon of 'left-over men', are conveyed to audiences in foreign markets where these films are exported. This chapter highlights that humour in the Chinese romantic comedy genre is closely linked to social trends and globalisation. However, this phenomenon is erased in the English subtitles, as evidenced by the loss of humour relating to the specific Chinese social types.

Chapter 4 analyses the subtitling of humour in the Chinese chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), with a particular focus on female audiences. This chapter explores how humour is transferred in a Chinese chick flick, reinforcing notions of women's independence and freedom in a patriarchal society. It discusses dialect humour, cultural humour and heterogeneous complex humour and their translations in the English subtitles. The subtitling practice confirms that subtitlers often cater for a particular audience; in this case, female viewers. In most cases, cultural humour poses a challenge for the English subtitles, yet, as I demonstrate in this chapter, not only can humour of this type be successfully transferred, it can even become more humorous in the TL.

Chapter 5 focuses on the subtitling of humour in the Chinese black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010). This chapter aims to explore how humour is transferred across geographical boundaries for English-speaking audiences. The discussion draws on examples of different types of humour to showcase how humour is used to reveal the appeal for fairness in society. The absurd nature of black humour is also discussed. The chapter argues that VEH and surreal humour are lost in the TL, although non-verbal modes are used to compensate for losses of cultural and linguistic humour. Sexual humour and situational humour are successfully transferred in this film. This chapter underlines the process of multimodal loss and compensation which is characteristic of translations of humorous Chinese films by subtitling.

Chapter 6 presents the last case study in this thesis. It analyses the translation of humour in the Chinese martial arts comedy *Monster Hunter* (2015). It explores how the English subtitles of a Chinese martial arts comedy reflect the theme of the appeal for equality between men and women. In total, the chapter examines five different types of humour in detail. The English subtitles underline the fact that cultural substitution and dynamic equivalence are used in the transfer of VEH. However, non-verbal modes predominate over subtitles in terms of the transfer of non-verbal humour. This case study thus underlines the contention of this thesis that to focus solely on the linguistic nature of subtitles is to neglect the multimodal nature of humour generation.

Finally, **Chapter 7** presents the conclusion, summarising the research findings of this study and applying the results of the four case studies to re-evaluate the impact of the translations in the subtitles of Chinese comedies across AVT studies more broadly. Chinese humour, it argues, is multimodal in its generation and, therefore, so must be research analyses of its translation. The case studies of these Chinese comedies should force AVT studies out of its linguistic focus, pushing for a multifaceted, multimodal reading of the complexities of humour generation in subtitled works.

To summarise, this thesis considers the translation of humour in Chinese comedies as an important yet underexplored area of academic research. It goes beyond existing linguistic discussions of translating Chinese humour into English and creatively applies the concept of multimodality to explore the complexities of modes as they interact to trigger humour through the subtitling process. By engaging with different types of humour transfer in four different genres of Chinese comedies through its case studies, the thesis explores how humour in the Chinese filmic context has been translated for English-speaking audiences through the medium of subtitles. It casts Chinese comedies and the translations in their subtitles as key case studies for AVT studies because of both their complexity and the intriguing multimodal negotiations they lead us to evaluate.

Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1   Introduction

This chapter aims to review the relevant literature relating to the subtitling of humour in Chinese comedies and set out the theoretical framework of this thesis. The literature review focuses on four aspects: an introduction to theories of humour and typologies of audiovisual humour; humour in Chinese culture and film; subtitling Chinese audiovisual texts; and multimodality both in general and in translation studies, with particular attention to AVT, in order to highlight links between these theories and their application in this thesis.

2.2   Theoretical approaches to humour

2.2.1   Theories of humour

Humour arguably plays a key role in communication across languages and between different cultures. Numerous studies focus on humour in academic disciplines ranging from psychology to philosophy. This chapter cannot seek to cover all these projects. Instead, it identifies key studies that can be applied to the heterogeneous genres within Chinese comedy. As such, it considers only theories of humour that are deemed pertinent to audiovisual humour in Chinese comedy films.[17] The relevant theories of humour applied in this thesis have their roots in philosophy and can be divided into three groups: incongruity theories, superiority theories and release theories.

According to Raskin (1984, cited in Attardo 1994, p.47), theories of humour can be grouped into three categories: incongruity theories, hostility/disparagement theories and release theories. As shown in Table 2.1, Attardo summarises these three families of humour theories by delineating their relationships in a similar table (1994, p.47).

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[17] Salvatore Attardo reviews a whole spectrum of theories of humour across time and countries in his book *Linguistic Theories of Humour* (1994). Num Fung Chang provides a full discussion of three types of humour theories (incongruity theories, superiority theories and release theories) in his PhD thesis 'Yes prime manipulator: a descriptive study of a Chinese translation of British political humour' (1997).

Cognitive	Social	Psychoanalytical
Incongruity	Hostility	Release
Contrast	Aggression	Sublimation
	Superiority	Liberation
	Triumph	Economy
	Derision	
	Disparagement	

Table 2.1 The three families of humour theories

Table 2.1 offers a general picture of three groups of theories related to humour. Incongruity theory takes a cognitive approach to humour and emphasises contrast. Martin (2010, pp.62-63) asserts that incongruity theory is closely linked to the mental aspects of humour rather than its social and emotional aspects. Superiority theories are socially driven and underline negative emotions, such as hostility, aggression, derision and disparagement as the key drivers of humour. Release theory is psychoanalytical in its formulation and is associated with suppression. This theory suggests that humour is a release or liberation from nervous tension.

Aristotle is the first key thinker associated with incongruity theory because of certain comments he made; Kant and Schopenhauer then developed this theory (Morreall 1987, p.130). Different scholars interpret incongruity theory in starkly different ways. Kant proposes that "Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation" (Morreall 1987, p.175) "of a strained expectation into nothing"(1892, cited in Morreall 1987, p.130). Pascal argues that "Nothing produces laughter more than a surprising disproportion between that which one expects and that which ones sees" (1933, cited in Morreall 1987, p.130). Morreall suggests that incongruity means "A relation of conflict between something we perceive, remember, or imagine, on the one hand, and our conceptual patterns with their attendant expectations, on the other" (1987, pp.188-189). However, among the incongruity theories, McGhee (1979, pp.6-7 cited in Attardo 1994, p.41) provides a particularly incisive definition:

The notion of congruity and incongruity refers to the relationships between components of an object, event, idea, social expectation, and so forth. When the arrangement of the constituent elements of an event is incompatible with the normal or expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous.

However, not all laughter is incongruous. Morreall points out that the incongruity triggered by negative emotions such as anger, fear or indignation would not lead to humour (1987, p.130). That is, "Incongruities such as those involved in human deformities and disasters often produce pain and sadness, rather than laughter (Morreall 1987, p.175). This incongruity theory highlights the disadvantage of incongruity theory, which is that it fails to explain some disharmonious instances that do not produce laughter.

Superiority theory dates back to Plato and Aristotle. Hobbes summarises superiority theory as follows: "The passion of Laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly" (1840, cited in Morreall 1987, p.20). Superiority theory suggests that humour results from the notion that we see ourselves as superior to others. However, this theory has drawn criticism from many scholars. Morreall argues that superiority theory cannot sufficiently explain humour because there are many situations in which laughter does not derive from a feeling of superiority (1987, p.129). Wordplay and puns are a notable example (Morreall 1987, p.140).

Release theory (or relief theory/relief from restraint theory) considers humour to be "the venting of express nervous energy"(Morreall 1987, p.6). Scholars of release/relief theory include Spence and Freud. Freud observes that constrained or repressed nervous energy may trigger laughter that stems from two main sources: sex and violence. However, this theory is also flawed. As Morreall argues, "Like the Superiority Theory, the Relief Theory does not seem to capture the essence of laughter or humour" (1987, p.6). Laughter, Morreall argues, lasts longer than it takes to expend such a burst of nervous energy (Morreall 2008, p.223).

These humour theories all account for humour in different ways, but none of them entirely explains humour. However, they all partially support and feed into the complex, composite instances of humour this thesis explores in the subtitling of Chinese comedies. Humour in

audiovisual texts, this thesis argues, needs to be read as multimodal because it involves an array of modes (facial expressions, kinesic actions, background music, paralinguistic modes). Consequently, this study uses multimodality as it approach to exploring the complexity of humour transfer in Chinese comedies.

2.2.2   Humour in translation studies

Research into humour as part of translation studies is not well developed. Chiaro (2009b, pp.569-570) argues that "the issue of translation of humorous discourse has been largely ignored and it is likely that such neglect has been due to the sheer complexity involved in the production of adequate translations which were initially witty in intent". However, several recent publications have worked to counter this critical blind spot. In 2002, a special issue of the journal *The Translator: Studies in Intercultural Communication* focused specifically on translating humour. In the issue, Attardo (2002, pp.173-194) uses his General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) to analyse translation and humour. He asserts that applying GTVH to translations of humour can allow the difference between the translated humour and the original humour to be assessed. Basing his approach on Attardo's theory, Zabalbeascoa (2005, pp.185-207) builds a typology of humour using a binary branching tree structure, and his main finding is that it is a huge challenge for translators to achieve equivalence. Zabalbeascoa poses key questions about "the translatability of humour; how well humour travels across language and the nature of the barriers" (2005, p.186). This thesis uses his theory as a basis and seeks to develop it by using it to analyse specific AVT case studies. In order to explore the complexities of humour translation in the subtitling process, this thesis seeks to ascertain how humour is classified in translation studies and in subtitling in particular. It draws on the classification of different types of humour by Chiaro (2006 and 2010b, Martínez-Sierra (2006), Raphaelson-West (1989) and Zabalbeascoa (1996).

Raphaelson-West (1989) divides humour into just three groups: linguistic jokes, cultural jokes and universal jokes. Zabalbeascoa (1996) develops a more complicated and advanced taxonomy that classifies jokes into six categories:

1)   International jokes are a funny story or one-liner where the restrictive force of the language and cultural differences is greatly reduced insofar as the comic effect does

not depend on either language-specific wordplay or familiarity with unknown specific aspects of the source culture.

2) With national-culture–and-institution jokes, there is a need to adapt national, cultural or institutional references in the original to retain the humorous effect for a foreign audience.

3) National-sense-of-humour jokes: certain joke types and joke themes are apparently more popular in some countries or communities than in others and constitute a kind of tradition or intertextual frame of understanding.

4) Language-dependent jokes rely on features of natural language, such as polysemy, homophony and zeugma, for their effect. Such jokes may be translated more or less literally when two languages are very closely related.

5) Visual jokes: analysis of this type of humour should discriminate between humour derived solely from what one sees on the screen and the kind of joke that may seem entirely visual but is really a coded version of a linguistic joke, as in a rebus.

6) Complex jokes combine any two or more of the other types of jokes (1996, pp.251-254).

Zabalbeascoa suggests that in order to preserve humour when translating national-culture-and-institution jokes, adaptation needs to be applied. Furthermore, with regard to language-dependent jokes, he proposes that literal translation can resolve any issue between two similar languages, and such jokes might be adapted to become 'international jokes'. The case studies in this thesis expose some of the blind spots of his theory, which does not discuss subtitling. Moreover, the case study languages are highly distant from each other and therefore his proposed strategy of literal translation is not applicable. VEH with elements of cultural-specific humour are a recurring feature of Chinese comedy films. The case studies in this thesis highlight that such humour often cannot be translated literally. Although Zabalbeascoa emphasises that radical substitution or other shifts can be used to translate humour related to language, his suggestions are not anchored in concrete proposals and strategies for translators. This thesis seeks to offer insights in this area based on case studies that test and evaluate Zabalbeascoa's theoretical framework.

Martínez-Sierra (2006, pp.290-292) classifies eight different types of humour in the dubbed version of the American sitcom *The Simpsons*:

1) Community-and-Institution Elements refer to cultural or intertextual features that are rooted and tied to a specific culture.

2) Community-Sense-of-Humour-Elements comprise topics which appear to be more popular in certain communities than in others.

3) Linguistic Elements are based on linguistic features.

4) Visual Elements comprise a differentiation between the humour produced by what we can see on the screen and those elements that in fact constitute a visually coded version of a linguistic element.

5) Graphic Elements include the humour derived from a written message within an on-screen image.

6) Paralinguistic Elements include the non-verbal qualities of a voice, such as the intonation, rhythm, tone, timbre and resonance, which are associated with expressions of emotions.

7) Non-Marked (Humorous) Elements represent miscellaneous instances that are not easily categorised as one of the other categories but are, nevertheless, humorous.

8) Sound Elements are sounds that by themselves or in combination with other elements may be humorous.

Martínez-Sierra's study presents a descriptive analysis of how elements in humorous extracts have been translated given the constraints of linguistic and intercultural barriers. His research is interdisciplinary, encompassing translation studies and pragmatics. Importantly, he also emphasises that "Rather than restricting translators, visual components often contribute to a better understanding of target texts" (Martínez-Sierra 2006, p.294). This signals that translating audiovisual texts is indeed a multimodal task.

2.3 Humour in China

2.3.1 Humour in Chinese culture

Chen (1984, p. 1) offers an incisive overview of the traditions in Chinese humour. In her article, she proposes that the history of Chinese humour is like a river filled with satire, and the function of Chinese humour, from its very beginning, has been to criticise society rather than merely to entertain. She also suggests that Chinese history and cultural traditions exert a profound influence over Chinese humour. Yue (2010) produces five findings by looking back over the origin and development of humour in China, summarising the major forms of humour throughout Chinese history including comic strips, satire and modern humour. He explores different philosophical attitudes to humour in China and investigates prejudices against humour in Chinese culture. Yue argues that Chinese humour is cautious, conservative and restrained as a result of cultural, sociological and political influences. He argues that certain elements of Chinese humour – wit, irony, quips, sarcasm, wisecracks, nonsense and self-deprecation – correspond to the Western sense of humour, but that Chinese humour is characterised by subtleness and delicacy that are different from Western humour. However, Yue's conclusion about Western humour is overgeneralised, ignoring the fact that there are different types of humour in the Western world.

Yutang Lin first translated the term 'humour' in 1924 and promoted it to modern Chinese society. According to Davis (2013, p.3), humour is "a neologism dating from interaction with the English language—thus indicative of a novel concept". Lin made a comparison between *youmo* (humour) and the earlier term *huaji*: "humour is naturally appreciable verbal behaviour making people smile thoughtfully whereas huaji is intentionally despicable behaviour acting in front of people to win laughter" (Liao 2003 cited in Yue p.405). The reform and opening-up policy of 1978 allowed Chinese audiences to see the outside world, and more significantly, Western definitions of humour came to influence Chinese comedy, leading to a new era of humour. Fanchou Hu's *Linguistic Humour* and Daren Tan's *Humour and Verbal-Expressed Humour*, both published in the 1980s, are important works in this area. Both of them explore humour from the perspective of rhetoric neglecting (Wei 2012, p.27).

In his detailed study of the difference between Western humour and Chinese (Hong Kong) humour, Walters concludes that there are some striking similarities between Western humour and Chinese humour with regard to non-verbal humour such as slapstick (1998, p.36). The author argues that both China (mainly Hong Kong) and Western countries thus far maintain a

tradition of using "ribald, bawdy and scatologic humour" (Walters 1998, p.37). By comparison with Western humour, Chinese humour is lowbrow, physical and often takes the form of physical actions, such as "someone breaks a leg" (Walters 1998, pp.35-36). China is a country with a vast territory (nine-tenths the size of Europe) and 55 minority groups, which provides fertile ground for humour (Walters 1998, p.26). The use of dialect is a key feature of Chinese humour, yet the reception of dialect humour varies in different regions. Every nation has its own taboos. In China, Walter argues, there is a wealth of taboo humour such as poking fun at death and mothers-in-law.

In the past decade, humour research has been mainly conducted in the field of linguistics. Wang and Lin, for example, identify "seven major directions of linguistic research on language humour in China, that is, pragmatics, cognitive pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, rhetoric, language logics, systematic-functional linguistics and others" (2011, p.28). Wei (2012) argues that approaches to Chinese humour have overly privileged linguistic aspects. He suggests that linguistic humour research in China has failed to link with other disciplines, making the research only partial in comparison to what has been investigated in the West. Moreover, he states that humour research has not received due attention in domestic China: there has been a cultural bias against humour in China and humour and satire were regarded as inferior forms of aesthetic expression following Confucian conservatism (Yue 2010, p. 411).

2.3.2   Humour in Chinese films

Comedy as a genre in Chinese film has a history as tumultuous as that of the Chinese nation itself in the twentieth century. China's earliest domestic comedy, *Labourer's Love,* was released in 1923, but the genre was, as Zhou (1998, p.22) argues, in a difficult position until the 1990s. Zhou (1998, p.24) attributes this difficulty to the unstable political situation created by events such as the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and the ten years of turmoil associated with the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976.[18] Such events, He (2011, p.26) argues, exerted a negative influence over the development of film comedy until the 1970s.

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[18] Films including comedies such as *Blooming Flowers and Full* and *Cuckoo Cuckoo Again* were publicly criticised and even banned when 'anti-rightist campaigns' were launched in 1958 (He 2011, p.26).

Four different genres of Chinese comedy have been identified since the country's foundation in 1949. They are satire (1950s) melodrama (1960s),[19] self-deprecating comedy (1980s),[20] and hybrid comedy genres (1990s) (Zhou 1998, p.22).[21] In the 1990s, China experienced fundamental social change after economic reform. The country enjoyed a period of steady economic growth, which provided a stable environment for the development of Chinese comedy. Caihong He (2011, pp.37-46) proposes that comedy films can be classified into seven different genres: comedy in relation to social issues, city comedy, black comedy, parody, nonsense comedy, martial arts comedy and romantic comedy. It is worth noting that He's classification of comic films is inconsistent and ambiguous. For example, city comedy emphasises the film's setting (the city) rather than its theme, while martial arts comedy and romantic comedy do define humour by the film's theme (martial arts and romance respectively). The juxtaposition of different elements to group comedies in this way is problematic, and one film may fit multiple categories. However, He's categorisation of nonsense comedy is important to this thesis. Non-sense comedy is also called *mo lai tau* comedy. It originated in south China but became widespread in Hong Kong in the 1980s (Yue 2010, pp.407-408). The distinctive feature of nonsense comedy is "cute and malicious self-entertaining wit or sarcasm" (Yue 2010, p.408). It is a category to which this thesis will return. To be consistent in its use of terminology in relation to Chinese comedy, this thesis classifies

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[19] Building on Zhou's classification of Chinese comedies, He (2011) suggests that three further forms of comedy appeared after 1949. They are satire from 1956, eulogistic comedy from 1959, and light-hearted comedy from 1962. Comedies from the 1950s to the 1960s are, He argues, combined with satire and used as propaganda tools to praise socialism (He 2011, p.26).

[20] Self-deprecating films set a precedent for black comedy in the twenty-first century. Self-deprecating films are also called "absurdist films" or "films of mockery" (Liu 2018, p.158). *Black Cannon Incident* (1985) and *Dislocation* (1986) are examples of "films of mockery" (Liu 2018, p.159). These films use elements of 'black humour' (a conflation of 'joy and despair') and absurd plots to trigger discomfort and comic emotions among audiences in order to explore social issues (Liu 2018, p.159).

[21] Xiaogang Feng's *Hesuipian* (贺岁片 *New Year's Film*) is a representative example. Light-hearted comedy is best represented as a film type by Peisi Chen and his father Qiang Chen. Comedy of manners (风俗喜剧) is a film type most readily associated with director Gang Zhang. Zhang directed 29 comedies of manners between 1983 and 2006. The director rose to fame thanks to his series of 'Aman'-style comedies (阿满喜剧), which is by far the longest comedy series in the history of Chinese cinema (Rao 2005, p.250). 'Aman' is a general name used to refer to different characters across Zhang's 29 comedies. They are ordinary people such as workers, farmers, soldiers and painters (Rao 2005, p.253). In these films, humour is used as a vehicle to satirise social issues such as bureaucracy, profiteering and globalisation (Rao 2005, pp.250-251). Jianya Zhang's black comedies *San Mao Joins the Army* (三毛从军记) and *Mr. Wang: Flames of Desire* (王先生之欲火焚身) use parody to highlight irony and humour (Rao 2005, p.258). Mainstream comedy (主旋律喜剧) also has a clear foothold in China. It is used as government propaganda and aims to promote mainstream socialist values and nationalism, to reflect revolutionary history and eulogise the heroic stories of ordinary people (Zhou 2019, p.56).

films by making a direct link between a film's theme and its genre: romantic comedy, chick flick, black comedy, and martial arts comedy. It focuses on how humour is translated in specific comedies to start developing an overarching understanding of Chinese humour more broadly across genre.

One distinctive feature of Chinese comedy in film stems from the use of *Xiaopin*-style language such as political words, lyrics from popular songs and buzzwords. *Xiaopin* (He 2011, p.165), from which this is borrowed, refers to sketch comedy or "theatrical skits performed on stage or television" (Du 1998, p.382). It is a comedic performance of no more than fifteen minutes' duration. It is performed by two or more actors and often involves props. *Xiaopin* tells a simple story, and humour is generated by the incongruity between the actors' dialogue (the use of homophones and dialects) and their physical actions (pantomime and symbolic gestures derived from traditional Chinese theatre) (Du 1998, pp.383-385). In her study of Chinese comedies, He (2011, p.163) points out that Chinese filmmakers have long used *Xiaopin* to produce humour in their comedy movies. Since its birth in the 1960s, *Xiaopin* has become a familiar art form, and its present boom demonstrates that it enjoys widespread acceptance in China (He 2011, p.163). Many *Xiaopin* performers (such as Peisi Chen, Benshan Zhao, Wei Fan and Xiaoshenyang) have taken leading roles in film comedies (He 2011, p.165). In some instances, humour is based on the audience's familiarity with these stars as *Xiaopin* performers rather than being triggered solely by the film.

Language is often the engine that activates humour in Chinese films.[22] According to Gu (1963, pp.333-339), language in comedies can be classified into five categories: misunderstandings based on language (e.g. homophones), repetition, puns, rhetorical devices, and incorrect logic. He (2011, pp.181-182) proposes that slang, two-part allegorical sayings, riddles, tongue-twisters, dialect, and parody are frequently used to create humour. In other words, humour is elicited by different language forms that include both cultural references and linguistic elements. Of these techniques, parody and dialect are frequently used by Chinese directors. Parody is defined as "an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect" (Oxford Reference). Three forms of parody can be

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[22] For example, in the comedies of Chinese director Xiaogang Feng, there is a close relationship between language (e.g. dialect, wordplay on set phrases) and humour.

identified in Chinese comedies (He 2011, p.192): parody of revolutionary discourse and political slogan, parody of classic literary works, and parody of buzzwords such as advertisements, web buzzwords, names of celebrities and lyrics of popular songs. Like parody, *pintie* (拼贴) is used to produce humour in Chinese comedy. *Pin* literally means 'put together' while *tie* translates as 'paste'. Humour comes from incongruity in the comparison of things that are completely different. There are also three different types of *pintie*: juxtaposing antique things with modern things, putting elegance and vulgarity together (with humour conveyed by contrast), and monolingual (Chinese) speakers switching inexpertly to a different language (code-switching humour) (He 2011, pp.201-202).

Use of dialect is another distinctive feature of Chinese comedies. The comedy boom of the 1990s marks a golden era for the so-called Fifth Generation group.[23] Comedy films often feature dialects tailored to meet the comedic expectations of Chinese audiences. Characters' "quaint, unfamiliar accents" (Li 2018, p.274) are a source of humour for urban audiences. China is a country where 129 languages are used by 56 ethnic groups (Han and 55 others) (Li 2018, p.271). This dialect humour is possible as a result of mass media. Audiences have become familiar with dialect due to the popularity and widespread of *Xiaopin* and *Xiangsheng* (He 2011, p.214) [24].

In conclusion, it can be said that humour has a long, diverse and not unproblematic history in the annals of Chinese film.

2.4   Subtitling of humour in China: a research gap

Despite the long-standing tradition of professional practice, which can be traced back to the emergence of Chinese cinema in 1896, AVT has not received much scholarly attention in China, and research in this area lags behind its Western counterpart (Xiao and Peng 2019, pp.261-

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[23] The Fifth Generation group refers to graduates from the Beijing Film Academy following China's Cultural Revolution. These filmmakers "revolutionised the Chinese film industry by exploring new themes and cinematographic styles" (Li 2018, p.273). Their films focus on social issues in the economic reform era, using a gentle tone to offer their critiques (Clark 2005 cited in Li 2018, p.273). They make creative use of dialects and local language as a tool for "establishing the realism of characters, ambiance, locale, and atmosphere (Li 2018, p.273).

[24] Xiangsheng is a traditional Chinese comedic art performed as a monologue or dialogue (Yue 2010 p.407).

262, Wang et al. 2020, pp.474-475). Where studies do exist on AVT in China, their scope is often relatively limited, their research perspectives at times overlap, and publications are largely written in Chinese (Xiao and Peng 2019, p.267, Wang et al. 2020, p.475,).[25]

If there are research gaps in AVT studies in the Chinese context, similar problems exist in the area of subtitling, with subtitling of humour being marginalised even within this field.[26] Moreover, existing studies tend to discuss the translation of humour based on imported audiovisual products such as British and American sitcoms. Tang (2019) explores the translation of verbal humour in the British sitcom *The IT Crowd* by employing Nida's (1964) functional equivalence. Wang (2019) also discusses subtitling of verbal humour in the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* from the perspective of functional equivalence. Focusing on another American sitcom, *Modern Family*, Wang (2018) examines the translation of humour using functionalism. Several studies investigate how humour is translated in the American sitcom *Friends*, starting with Tian and Li (2009). Then Wang (2013) explores the same subject in another study using functional equivalence, while Guan's (2013) interest is in the translation of culturally specific humour in *Friends*. Hei (2013) provides an analysis of the subtitling strategies applied to humour in the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*. All of these studies lack a comprehensive discussion of the complexity of the transfer of humour through subtitling. To address this, different approaches to examining the translation of humour in audiovisual texts need to be adopted. This proposal resonates with the findings of Liang (2017), who acknowledges that there are complexities and challenges in the subtitling of British linguistic and cultural humour for Chinese viewers. To ascertain such complexity, she employs Venuti's triple context and Zabalbeascoa's classification of humour to explore how the subtitler manipulates the humour transfer in the British romantic comedy *Notting Hill*.

The first systematic study of the translation of humour through subtitles was conducted in 2011 by Haiya Dong. Dong examined humour transfer from English to Chinese and made a significant contribution in this area. Dong (2011, pp.26-27) applied qualitative and

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[25] See Liu et al. (2011), Xiao and Peng (2019), Wang et al. (2019) and Wang et al. (2020) for detailed reviews of research into subtitling in China.

[26] As previously discussed, the literature focused on subtitling of humour only accounts for roughly 20% of all studies on subtitling according to the CNKI.

quantitative research methods to analyse how the audiovisual humour of American sitcoms is transferred through the medium of subtitles to a Chinese audience. The data used for analysis was collected from five American sitcoms: *Growing Pains* (seasons 1-3), *Friends* (seasons 4-6), *Will and Grace* (season 2), *Everybody Loves Raymond* (seasons 1, 5 and 6), and *Seinfeld* (seasons 1-4). Dong selected representative examples of humour from these shows, analysed how different types of humour are transferred into Chinese in the subtitles and suggested a series of translation strategies for rendering culture-specific humour. Her findings are diverse. Firstly, as much of the difficulty in translating sitcoms lies in rendering humorous colloquial utterances, translators are required to apply various strategies in order to adapt or rewrite the humour from the SL to the TL without violating the culture-specific frame. In addition, translators should pay more attention to the translation of complex humour, and their rewriting of the humour must take paralanguage, transcript, and object language into account. Lastly, VEH and culture-specific humour present formidable challenges to translators rendering sitcoms, thus becoming the touchstone to evaluate the performance of translators (Dong 2011 pp.145-147). Dong's (2011, pp.57-73) classification of humour does have some blind spots. Dong grouped humour into five different categories based on humour classifications proposed by Western scholars such as Zabalbeascoa and Díaz-Cintas:

- non-verbal visual humour: body language and object language (e.g. props, costumes)
- text-expressed visual humour (such as the title of a book or the name of a shop in the visual channel)
- non-verbal auditory humour (non-verbal sounds like noise and animal sounds; paralanguage)
- VEH (situational humour and conceptual humour, wordplay and cultural humour)
- complex humour (a conflation of visual humour and VEH).

Dong's classification of humour in American sitcoms does consider the polysemiotic nature of audiovisual products. Hence, it highlights the fact that the classification of humour in audiovisual texts needs to consider resources in both the visual and acoustic communicational channels. However, one important shortcoming of her classification is that she locates situational humour or conceptual humour as a subcategory of VEH. This thesis considers that there is not always a clear-cut distinction regarding the classification of situational humour because "any joke must have some situation" (Attardo 1994, p.225). Situational humour can

be a subcategory of VEH if linguistic elements specific to the situation are used to convey humour. In other words, when humour is provoked by the language in a certain situational context, situational humour does come under the category of VEH. However, if situational humour derives exclusively from non-verbal elements such as physical slapstick and sound effects (e.g. a man slipping on a banana peel), situational humour belongs to the category of non-verbal humour. A related flaw in Dong's study is that the author focuses almost entirely on the translation of VEH, with insufficient discussion of the translation of non-verbal humour.

To date, works discussing humour transfer from Chinese into English through the medium of subtitles remain scant. According to the CNKI database, only one published article (Deng 2014) and two MA dissertations (Cui 2010, Zhang 2012) explore the translation of humour in Chinese audiovisual products. The Translation Studies Bibliography and Google Scholar produce similar results suggesting that this area of research has not yet received the scholarly attention it merits.

Using amateur translation offered by BBS BTwuji (BT 无极论坛) as a corpus, Hongchun Deng (2014) selects four examples from the Chinese comedy *If You Are the One* to explore how humour is translated for international viewers. Humour in this film results from the use of rhetorical devices such as euphemism, parody and exaggeration. However, the fansubbing merely adopts foreignisation to deal with the transfer of linguistic and cultural humour through the subtitles. Deng suggests that it is important to adopt both domestication and foreignisation strategies to facilitate understanding of Chinese humour among the target audience. The main limitations of Deng's study are that his selection of examples is not systematic, his focus is limited to a single film, and he fails to group the examples into different categories.

Naijun Cui (2010) employs the framework for multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) proposed by Delu Zhang (2009) to examine how humour is translated in the Chinese comedy *If You Are the One*. Cui highlights the importance of mode integration in the meaning-making process and suggests that meanings in audiovisual products rely on combinations of different semiotic modes. On this basis, he suggests that two-line subtitles, reduction and omission are the most

effective strategies to enhance the target audience's understanding of humour. Cui's work, like that of Deng, provides a useful foundation to this study. However, this thesis seeks to add to Cui's initial findings through the scope and range of its corpus.

Focusing on omitted scenes, Yilei Yuan (2009) explores the use of explicitation strategy in translating verbal and non-verbal humour into English subtitles in the Chinese black comedy *A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop*. Yuan's study reveals that non-verbal humour is retained in the English subtitles because this type of humour relies on mise-en-scène in the visual channel. On the other hand, the subtitling of verbal humour into English is often problematic (e.g. humour is lost in the TL). To replicate the same humorous effect in the English version of the film is challenging in spite of adopting the tactic of explicitation because of the dramatic linguistic and cultural differences between Chinese and English. Yuan's paper would have been more convincing if the author had given sufficient consideration to how non-verbal modes work with the verbal mode to trigger humorous response in analysing verbal humour. This thesis will rectify that blind spot and consider the combination of a range of modes to convey humorous meaning in audiovisual texts.

In her study of the translation of humour in Xiaogang Feng's comedies, Jie Zhang (2012) adopts relevance theory to discuss how humour is translated in the subtitles. She emphasises the value of retranslating the subtitles to examine them on different levels, such as the phonetic level, lexical level and rhetorical level. Zhang provides three useful strategies based on relevance theory to mediate the translation of humour from Chinese to English: maintaining the clues in the SL, retaining the gap between maximum relevance and optimal relevance, and sustaining a degree of difficulty in the target audience's processing effort. These strategies can effectively sustain the SL humour in the TL. This thesis concurs with Zhang's conviction that a broad corpus must be evaluated in order for the full range and depth of subtitling strategies to be evaluated, but it differs from Zhang's approach in its theoretical framework.

In summary, the subtitling of humour in the Chinese context is a comparatively understudied area of AVT. There remains considerable room for further research. This thesis attempts to fill this research gap by examining how humour is translated into English in case studies of

different types of Chinese comedies. To achieve this new perspective and fill the gap in existing outputs, this thesis employs multimodality to examine how different modes contribute to the transfer of humour through subtitling practice.

2.5   A multimodal approach to the subtitling of humour

Multimodality provides a framework that addresses the complexity of communication beyond language. Multimodal texts "combine and integrate the meaning-making resources of more than one semiotic modality – for example, language, gesture, movement, visual images, sound and so on – in order to produce a text specific meaning" (Thibault 2000, p.311). Audiovisual texts, and subtitling in particular, are multimodal artefacts par excellence, which result from the combined efforts of "all the resources used to create and interpret them" (Baldry and Thibault 2006, p.18). Language is just one of many modes that create meaning in multimodal communications (Boria and Tomalin 2019, p.14, Scollon and Scollon 2009, p.180). However, much of the research in translation studies, particularly in the area of AVT, struggles with the application of multimodality to interactions between verbal and non-verbal modes. Linguistic equivalence between the SL and TL remains the predominant focus of translation activity (Pérez-González 2014a, p.185). In recognition of the importance of mode integration and the interaction of modes in translation practices, there is a pressing need to adopt multimodality to explore the subtitling process in general, and the subtitling of humour in a Chinese context specifically, for three key reasons.

Firstly, in audiovisual products, non-verbal modes such as gestures, facial expressions, sound effects and music accompany the verbal mode (linguistic semiotic resources). AVT is concerned with the transfer of multimodal texts into another language and culture (Pérez-González 2008, p.13). In such texts, meaning is conveyed by amalgamating verbal modes (e.g. film dialogue) with non-verbal modes (such as gestures, music and bodily movement) in order to generate a useful, important and clear whole. This view is endorsed by Chiaro (2006 p.198). Secondly, despite key developments over the past thirty years since its beginnings in the 1990s, multimodal research has not yet paid enough attention to the field of AVT. Pérez-González (2014a p.185) points out that few studies have focused on the interplay between subtitles and other semiotic modes in translations of audiovisual texts. This is particularly true for subtitled

Chinese films where scant work of this kind exists. Thirdly, humour is a universal phenomenon across different cultures, and it plays a crucial role in human interaction. As a communicational form, humour, like subtitling, is inherently multimodal. The critical frameworks of multimodality are therefore an essential foundation for this thesis on the subtitling of Chinese humour. Humour is multimodal on two levels. On the macro level of comedy, hybrid forms of humour, such as verbal humour, non-verbal humour and heterogeneous complex humour, may be identified. More than one semiotic mode may provoke laughter. On the micro level, the transfer of humour is not merely a transfer of linguistic meaning, but rather an integrative transfer of different modes. The humour in any unit of analysis depends on a combination of different modes which require the communicators to interrelate semantically all the semiotic modes involved.

2.5.1 Multimodality: a gap in the research on subtitling audiovisual texts

Multimodality has been widely used in many disciplines since 2001, when Kress and Van Leeuwen first proposed a multimodal communication theory (Kaindl 2013, pp.257–258, Kaindl 2019, p.49). However, translation studies continues to focus mainly on the linguistic dimension of meaning transfer, even in AVT, despite Roman Jakobson's assertion as far back as 1959 that meaning is conveyed by more than language (Kaindl 2019, p.53).[27]

In the area of AVT, a small but growing body of literature has attempted to explore the connections between multimodality and AVT from various perspectives. For example, Taylor (2004) provides an interesting insight into the use of a methodological tool (multimodal transcription) to explore the subtitling process for one episode of the British comedy *Blackadder*. Pérez-González (2007) explores amateur subtitling cultures using multimodal theory. Mubenga (2009) examines interlingual subtitling through a multimodal pragmatic analysis. Balirano (2013) proposes a multimodal and corpus-based approach to examining the dubbing of humour for Italian audiences. Pérez-González (2019) carries out a multimodal analysis of changing subtitling aesthetics across media culture, paying special attention to the Chinese participatory subculture around the commentary sharing system Danmu. Pinto and

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[27] See Klaus Kaindl (2013) and (2019) for an extensive survey of the existing literature on multimodality in translation studies. As this study focuses particularly on humour transfer in Chinese comedies, this thesis specifically reviews relevant literature in the area of AVT both within and outside China.

Mubaraki (2020) explore the multimodal corpus analysis of subtitling with particular interest in non-standard varieties. Although these studies mark a significant advance in investigating AVT from the perspective of multimodality, their approaches offer no explanation of how different modes interact with each other to produce meaning, in particular humour, which is at the centre of what this thesis will explore.

In terms of methodology, Taylor (2003), Desilla (2012) and Abdi and Khoshsaligheh (2018) adopt Baldry and Thibault's (2002) multimodal transcription. This methodological tool can be used to analyse semiotic resources in audiovisual texts such as advertisements, videos, web pages and films. The method is to break down an audiovisual text (such as a film) into single frames and analyse the semiotic resources that appear in each frame. Taylor (2003) employs this method to explore its suitability in formulating strategies for subtitling the Italian film *La Vita è Bella* into different languages. He concludes that multimodal transcription is an effective methodological approach to understanding how meaning is realised through the combination of various modes. Benefitting from Taylor's (2003, 2013) multimodal transcription, Abdi and Khoshsaligheh (2018) embark on an empirical reception study (conducting an interview and using a multiple-choice posttest) on the impact of reduced subtitles on Iranian audiences when watching a Persian subtitled version of the French-language film *Amélie*. Their study underlines that the interaction of modes is key to understanding film texts. The reduced subtitles do not adversely affect Iranian viewers' watching experience in comparison with the full/original subtitles because the semantic content is conveyed by non-verbal modes in the visual and acoustic channels. With a special interest in non-verbal modes in audiovisual products, Abdi and Khoshsaligheh's study sheds light on an empirical study from the multimodal perspective. This study will analyse how semiotic modes interact with each other to contribute to the humour with case studies. Similarly, drawing on insights from multimodality, film studies and relevance studies, Desilla (2012) explores the romantic comedies *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004) using multimodal transcription. Desilla concludes that implicatures perform comedic and narrative functions well if collaborating with all the semiotic modes pertaining to mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing and soundtrack. This has led authors such as Taylor (2016) to consider the benefits of multimodality to script reading and writing, to the consideration of linguistic, semiotic and cultural issues, and in relation to audio description. He points out that the

subtitler needs to consider mode integration to achieve multimodal cohesion in the subtitles. That means all cohesive elements of the text to be subtitled need to be analysed, ranging from words to images and the soundtrack (Taylor 2016, p.226). Taylor's study emphasises how the integration of semiotic resources in a filmic text can assist the subtitler in choosing flexible strategies to deal with the translation within the temporal and spatial constraints of subtitles. In other words, Taylor uses multimodality and the integration of modes to provide new insights into the subtitler's choice of strategies to improve the quality of subtitles. In contrast, this thesis focuses on how different modes interact to create humour, paying particular attention to the strategies that have been adopted by the subtitler. Moreover, the defect in Abdi and Khoshsaligheh, Desilla's and Taylor's argument is that, while they acknowledge the crucial importance of different modes and their integration for the transfer of meaning through the subtitling process, their discussion neglects the verbal mode as an indispensable part of semiotic interaction.

In China, academic discussions of multimodal audiovisual texts remain scarce. While research on AVT largely revolves around cultural perspectives, the interplay of semiotic resources such as light, music, colour and body language and their relevance to subtitling has yet to attract the critical attention it deserves in the Chinese context (Wang et al. 2019, p.37). Data collected from CNKI reveals that much remains to be written in relation to multimodality and AVT. Firstly, it is noteworthy that nineteen postgraduate (MA) dissertations (e.g. Cui 2010, He 2014, Kan 2014, Yang 2017, Luo 2018, Chen 2019, Zhou 2019) touch on the subject of multimodality and AVT, and multimodality-related publications in the area of AVT amount to forty-one outputs for the period from 2010 to 2019. Of these publications, only eight articles have been published in important journals such as the *Chinese Translators Journal* and *Shanghai Journal of Translators*. In addition, what work there is on the topic is not sufficiently diverse in its approach. Cui 2010, Chen 2011, Lv and Wu 2012, Yang 2012, Wang 2014, Ouyang 2015, Liang Y 2016, Lu and Xia, 2016, Luo 2019, and Xu 2019 all employ Delu Zhang's (2009) MDA framework to explore the translation of audiovisual texts, which suggests that the theoretical discussion has reached an impasse. These scholars acknowledge the multimodal nature of audiovisual products and highlight the significance of using multimodality to explore the interrelations between modes in subtitling. However, their focus remains linguistic discussion of the translation of the subtitles rather than a multimodal analysis of how modes interact to

generate meaning through the subtitling process. Since Zhang's theory has had an extensive influence, it is worth summarising it briefly.

Delu Zhang's (2009) MDA theory aims to provide a theoretical framework for studying the relationships between different modes (language, visual image, sound) in multimodal texts in the Chinese context. Zhang proposes that there are four levels within this framework: the cultural level (ideology and genre), the contextual level (scope of discourse, tone of discourse and methods of discourse), the content level, and the expressions level (meaning is conveyed by certain media: verbal or non-verbal) (Zhang 2009, p.25). Meaning and form are two elements that come under the content level. Meaning refers to the meaning of discourse such as ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. Form focuses on modes and their relationships (Zhang 2009, p.25).

Ying-Ting Chuang (2006), like Zhang, is one of a limited number of scholars who use multimodality in the field of AVT in the Chinese context. Chuang (2006) adopts the concept of multimodality to investigate the subtitling process from two perspectives: 1) how modes work in the translation process and their implications for the translator, 2) how translators integrate modes to recreate equivalence in the target text. The author concludes that subtitling is an intersemiotic translation practice, in which the verbal element is only one mode contributing meaning to the audiovisual text. Translators are required to consider and, where appropriate, engage all the available modes in dealing with meaning transfer in the subtitling process. Naijun Cui (2010) concurs in relation to the Chinese comedy *If You Are the One* (2008), one of the films considered in this thesis. An understanding of mode integration is key to uncovering the complexity of the subtitling process.

Inspired by multimodality, Nan Wang (2019) focuses on intersemiotic complementarity to explore subtitling and its acceptability in the film *Farewell, My Concubine*. Wang suggests that the importance of multimodality in understanding audiovisual texts cannot be neglected, because non-verbal modes can compensate for the linguistic loss of verbal modes in the process of subtitling. However, Chuang (2006), Cui (2010) and Wang (2019) leave space for further nuanced analysis of how different modes interact.

In conclusion, there are clear gaps in the research on multimodality in the Chinese context, its modes and their interrelationship. This thesis aims to fill those gaps and provide new insights for the understanding of AVT. While this work draws on existing research, it seeks to further the literature in this area by focusing on a largely unexplored area: the multimodal AVT of Chinese comedy films.

2.5.2   Core concepts for multimodality

So far, this section has shown that the multimodal complexity of film involves an array of elements to convey meaning. In fact, as Bateman and Schmidt point out, "Films are particularly designed to carry meanings, to have effects on their viewers, to build and combine patterns made in a variety of materials – visual, acoustic, spatial and more" (2012, p.28). To explore subtitling through multimodality and to understand the complex semiotic interplay in the construction of humour through the subtitling of Chinese comedies, it is necessary to discuss some core concepts relating to multimodality, in particular modes and semiotic relations.[28]

2.5.2.1   Modes in general

A key concept in the area of multimodality, a 'mode' is also referred to as a (semiotic) resource, code, sign system, or modality by different scholars (Jewitt et al. 2016, pp.3–4, Pérez-González 2014a, p.310). According to Bateman and Schmidt (2012, p.75), when exploring multimodality, the precise nature of a mode is unclear. Mode, within social semiotics, refers to "a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning" (Kress 2010, p.79). Social semiotics emphasises social context, arguing that modes are shaped and constructed in a certain context. Instances of modes include "image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack and 3D objects" (Kress 2010, p.79). As part of a social semiotic approach to multimodality, Kress (2010, p.79, 2019, p.28) proposes that different modes offer

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[28]Core concepts for multimodal analysis include not only modes and semiotic interrelations, but also materiality, modal affordance, and metafunction. The focus of this thesis is to explore how different semiotic modes interact to contribute to the humorous meanings conveyed through the subtitling of Chinese films. Hence, I have chosen the aspects of multimodality that are most relevant in exploring this subject. This does not mean that the other concepts, such as materiality and modal affordance in relation to multimodality, are not important. For a detailed discussion of these concepts, see Jewitt (2009) and Jewitt et al. (2016).

different potential to account for meaning-making and that meaning is a result of social actions and interactions. O'Halloran and O'Toole's perception of what constitutes a mode differs from that of social semiotics scholars. O'Halloran and O'Toole regard language and image as semiotic resources rather than modes (Jewitt 2009a, p.21). For them, meaning is realised through the integration of semiotic resources. For example, language can be realised through a visual mode or an oral mode in written text and spoken language respectively (Jewitt 2009a, p.22). Drawing on the work of social semiotics, Ying-Ting Chuang (2006, p.274) developed four theoretical points about mode and modality to explore how modes work and are transferred in AVT by subtitling in the Chinese context:

- Different modes have different meaning potential and materiality, which are not always available to or overly comprehended by the audience.

- All modes have specific social evaluations and demands, so the meaning potential of modes depends on the practical requirements of different communities and on different social contexts.

- All modes produce meanings through their intersection with each other.

- All modes are shaped, created and transformed in response to the need of social semiotic processes, so they are not static but fluid.

Despite the context and language differences between social semiotics and Chinese scholars, Kress (2010) and Chuang (2006) coincide in considering modes to be materials which are shaped by their social and cultural context: meaning is realised by the interactions among members of a society. As this thesis centres on how semiotic modes interact to evoke meaning through the subtitling process, it is essential to clarify how I understand and use modes in analysing the translation of Chinese comedies.

I use the term 'mode' to refer to a wide range of acoustic and visual semiotic resources for creating meaning. For example, music and soundtrack are acoustic modes, while facial expressions and gestures are visual modes. These semiotic modes can be divided into core modes and sub-modes. In accordance with Stöckl (2004, pp.12-13), who provides a framework for studying different modes in audiovisual texts, I consider image, language,

sound and music to be core modes, all of which have sub-modes (image sub-modes, language sub-modes, sound sub-modes and music sub-modes – see Figure 2.1). Core modes "contain central sign-repertoires that are deeply entrenched in people's popular perceptions of codes and communication and can stand on their own" (Stöckl 2004, p.14). In other words, core modes such as language, image and sound play predominant and independent roles in the construction of meaning. Sub-modes "constitute a mode in that they provide the building blocks of a mode's grammar" (Stöckl 2004, p.14). As Pérez-González (2014a, p.198) argues, each core mode entails a set of sub-modes, and interactions between core mode and sub-modes can further advance the realisation of the overall semiotic value. This thesis considers both core modes and sub-modes as integral to making meaning in the intricate process of humour transfer.

Core modes	Sub-modes
Image (non-verbal mode)	Elements, vectors, colour, lighting, size, distance, angle/perspective, composition, camera panning, camera tilting, camera cuts, visual effects, non-verbal means (gesture, posture and body language)
Language (verbal mode)	Type size, font, colours/shading, ornaments, spacing, paragraphing, margins, topics, speech acts, lexis, syntax, rhetorical figures, direction, speed, rhythm, special effects, volume, intonation, frequency, voice quality, rhythm, speed, pausing
Sound (non-verbal mode)	Intensity, volume, quality
Music (non-verbal mode)	Melody/tune, orchestration, rhythm/time, speed, provenance

Table 2.2 Network of sub-modes that comprise the core mode in audiovisual texts, adapted from Stöckl (2004, pp.12-13).

2.5.2.2   Modes in the construction of humorous meaning

As all modes can be used to create comic effect (Kaindl 2004, p.190), this section outlines how the verbal and non-verbal modes create meaning in the audiovisual text. Language or dialogue,

as an indispensable element in film, is the embodiment of the verbal mode. It conveys meaning via two channels – visual and acoustic – and two modes (verbal and non-verbal). Kozloff (2000, p.54) proposes that dialogue is "the comic engine of the text" in comedies (2000, p.54). Verbal humour is created "by means of language or text" (Dynel 2009, p.1284) in the form of jokes, conversational humour, lexemes and phrasemes, witticisms, irony, puns, allusions, retorts, teasing, banter, putdowns, self-denigrating humour and anecdotes (Dynel 2009, pp.1284–1295). Verbal humour, or VEH or linguistic humour, has been extensively explored by scholars from various perspectives (e.g. Attardo 2002, Chiaro 1992, 2005, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, Chłopicki 2005, Ritchie 2004, 2010, Zabalbeascoa 1996, 2005). Both verbal and non-verbal modes are equally important in the creation of humour/meaning. As Zabalbeascoa points out, "Verbal signs combine in various ways with other sounds and images to make up different patterns of cohesions, intertextuality and the other features of textual structure and meaning" (2008, p.23).[29]

The visual modes include sets of semiotic resources such as camera position, distance, visual collocation,[30] visual focus or gaze of participants,[31] kinesic aspects of the image,[32] setting, props, costume and lighting pertaining to mise-en-scène and cinematography (Baldry and Thibault 2006, Dix 2016, p.13). Semiotic components such as setting, props and costumes may create comic situations in the film. As Dix (2016, pp.16-21) observes, specific geographical settings can reinforce the flow of the film story; props play an informational role and can confirm a character's socio-economic status, occupation or psychological state; costume – including make-up and hairstyle – can evoke historical period, gender, national context and economic status; lighting such as high-key lighting may evoke a sense of optimism, and low-

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[29] As mentioned previously, based on Stöckl's classification of modes in the audiovisual text, the non-verbal modes are comprised of image, sound and music and some sub-modes (non-verbal means: gesture, posture and body language). To avoid ambiguity, Poyatos (2002a) and Dix's (2016) classifications of modes are more explicit in that they group the sub-modes with appropriates names such as kinesic actions, paralanguage, music and soundtrack. To keep the use of terminology consistent, in this thesis, the terms kinesic actions, paralanguage, music and soundtrack are replaced by kinesic modes, paralinguistic modes and the acoustic mode respectively.
[30] Visual collocation refers to resources of mise-en-scène (secondary items) which indicate the character's occupation or a certain behaviour (Baldry and Thibault 2006, p.198).
[31] Visual focus or gaze of participants refers to the way that characters in the film look at the viewers and other characters. As such, there is an interactive relationship between audiences and characters (Baldry and Thibault 2006, pp.200-201).
[32] Kinesic mode belongs to mise-en-scène, a part of the visual mode. However, it plays its own essential role and can intertwine with other semiotic modes to produce meaning in audiovisual texts. This thesis refers to kinesic mode separately to explore it interacts with other modes to contribute to humour.

key lighting tends to induce anxious and negative emotions. The resources of mise-en-scène by themselves do not evoke a specific meaning in the film: meaning relies on the combined effect of all the modes interacting.

Acting offers interaction between the kinesic mode (expressions, gestures, movements) and verbal modes (vocalisations) (Dix 2016, p.23). In his study of non-verbal communication, Fernando Poyatos defines the kinesic as:

> Conscious and unconscious psychomuscularly-based body movements and intervening or resulting still positions, either learned or somatogenic, of visual, visual-acoustic and tactile and kinesthetic perception, which, whether isolated or combined with the linguistic and paralinguistic structures and with other somatic and objectual behavioural systems, possess intended or unintended communicative value. (2002a, p.185)

The kinesic mode comprises a range of bodily movements which can work individually or jointly with verbal and non-verbal modes to make meaning. The kinesic mode is a component of the mise-en-scène, which can be perceived visually and audibly (applauding, clapping) and can support, weaken or contradict verbal language (Poyatos 2002a, pp.186-188). In most cases the paralinguistic mode corresponds to the kinesic mode, and they are in perfect cohesion with the verbal mode in communicative situations (Poyatos 2002a, p.188). However, AVT studies tend to pass over the semiotic combination of paralanguage with other modes participating in the meaning-making process (Pérez-González 2014a, p.200). This thesis aims to fill that gap and considers paralinguistic modes as an integral part of the constitution of humour.

Poyatos defines paralanguage as

> The nonverbal voice qualities, voice modifiers and independent utterances produced or conditioned in the areas covered by the supraglottal cavities (from the lips and the nares to the pharynx), the laryngeal cavity and the infraglottal cavities (lungs and esophagus), down to the abdominal muscles, as well as the intervening momentary silences, which we use consciously or unconsciously supporting, or contradicting the verbal, kinesic, chemical, dermal and thermal or proxemic messages, whether simultaneously to or alternating with them, in both interaction and noninteraction. (2002a, p.2)

The non-verbal mode of paralanguage can therefore be understood as the para-verbal means (sub-mode) of speech and is manifested by voice. Voice exacts a powerful influence over the construction and perception of personas in film (Pérez-González 2014b, p.122). The paralinguistic mode consists of different personal voice qualities (timbre, resonance, intensity or volume, loudness, tempo, pitch, intonation, syllabic duration and rhythm), qualifiers (respiratory, laryngeal control etc.), and differentiators (laughter, crying, shouting, sighing etc.) (Poyatos 2002a, pp.2-3). It not only allows us to identify individuals of different gender, age and occupation, but it also performs a certain communicative function by correlating with other modes. For example, pitch can affect the meaning of a word by adding an inflection of surprise, contempt, anger or disappointment; slow tempo can imply hesitation and uncertainty, or threat, self-assurance and dominance (Poyatos 2002a). Like the paralinguistic mode, the acoustic mode, such as sound effects and music, is realised through the acoustic channel, conveying meaning alone or combined with other modes that are part of a film's composition.

The soundtrack is integral to creating humorous meaning in comedies. It comprises four elements: speech, music, sound effects and silence, and they work together to create the desired effects (Chatterji 2003, p.169, Dix 2016, pp.85-86). Among these elements, silence is an inaudible element which can create extra-cinematic meaning (Chatterji 2003, p.169). In film, the soundtrack enhances the visuals. Film sounds are divided into two types: diegetic (actual) and non-diegetic (commentative) (Dix 2016, p.87, Chatterji 2003, p.169). Sounds that are non-diegetic originate from off-screen resources and include voiceover or a musical score (Dix 2016, p.87). Diegetic sounds are "those that are ascribed to a visible or implied on-screen source" (Dix 2016, p.87). It is notable that the paralinguistic mode is mainly realised in the form of diegetic sound through the acoustic channel. As a sub-mode of the verbal mode, the paralinguistic mode can heighten the humorous effect of verbal language. Figure 2.3 shows that the paralinguistic mode also overlaps with the sound mode.
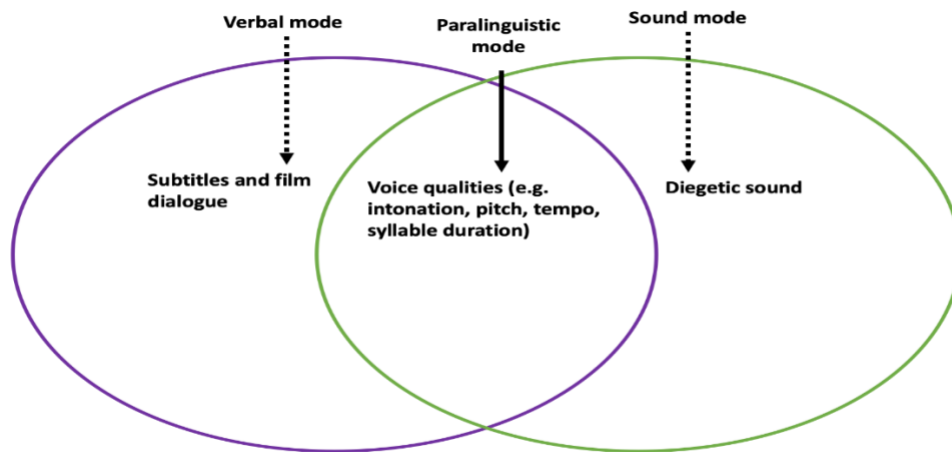
Figure 2.1 Relationship between paralinguistic mode, verbal mode and sound mode

Sound effects were first used in film in the late 1920s (Flueckiger 2009, p.151). The use of sound effects not only enhances the aesthetic quality of a film, but also evokes an emotional response in the audience (Chatterji 2003, p.169, Rowsell 2013, p.33). For example, there is a significant correlation between fast-paced footsteps and the anticipation of danger in a thriller film. In the *Tom and Jerry* animations, Tom's high-pitched scream is a marker of humour. In parallel, music in a film intensifies the viewer's perception of a scene (Burt 1994, p.4). Music can expand the film's humorous meaning through melody, orchestration, tune, rhythm and speed.

This section has discussed the role of different semiotic modes in the construction of humour in film and highlighted the importance of mode integration in the complex process of meaning-making. Figure 2.4 provides a structured overview of the range of phenomena that contribute to the construction of meaning in audiovisual texts, arranged by mode. This integrated approach to multimodality, combining verbal and non-verbal modes, is at the heart of the exploration of humour in Chinese comedies in this thesis.
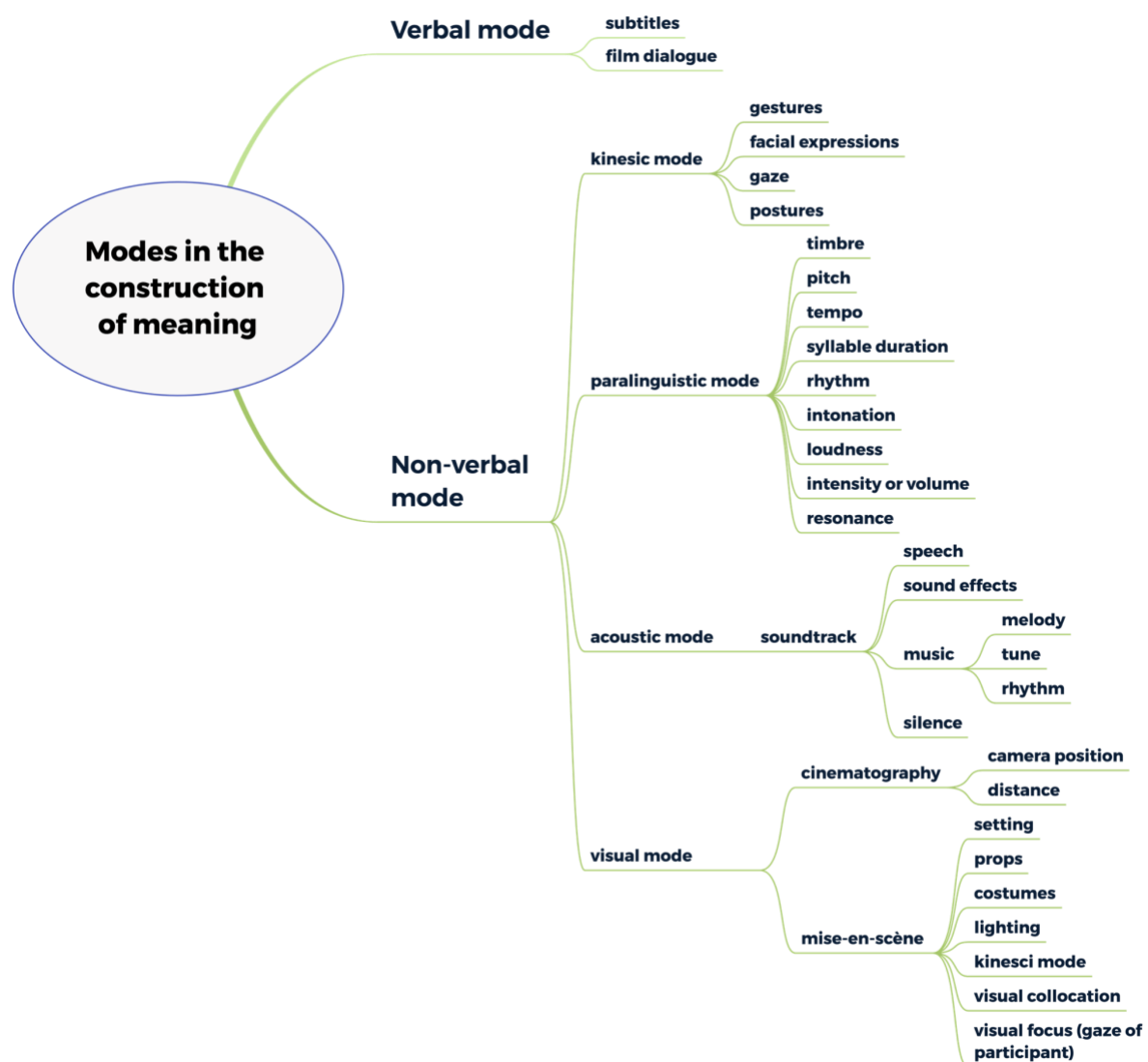
Figure 2.2 Modes in the construction of meaning in film

2.5.2.3   Semiotic interrelations

As Kress et al. point out, "Modes produce meaning in themselves and through their intersection or interaction with other modes" (2014, p.18). This raises the question of how modes interact to make meaning in audiovisual texts. Zabalbeascoa (2008) claims that the relationships between verbal, visual and other modes are key to interlingual subtitling. According to him, the relationship between different modes in AVT can take the following forms: complementarity, redundancy, contradiction (or incongruity), incoherence, separability, and aesthetic quality (Zabalbeascoa 2008, p.31). Complementarity arises when the various

modes depend on each other to produce meaning and perform a meaningful function in communication. Redundancy occurs when there are unnecessary repetitions. Contradiction involves a clash between reality and expectation. Incoherence refers to failure to combine semiotic modes meaningfully. Separability occurs where "a feature displayed by elements of a channel or sign system […] manage[s] to function autonomously or independently from the AV text, as when the soundtrack is made into a successful audio recording" (Zabalbeascoa 2008, p.31). Aesthetic quality refers to the need for the translator to weigh semantic value against aesthetics. However, not all the relationships identified by Zabalbeascoa are useful in exploring the interplay of semiotic modes in humour transfer in Chinese comedies. Zabalbeascoa's classification of the interrelationships between modes aims to provide guidelines for subtitlers to enhance the quality of subtitles, whereas this thesis explores the interrelationship between modes to explore how semiotic resources interact to trigger comic effects. Poyatos' (2002b) study of the non-verbal mode of communication casts light on this issue.

Poyatos summarises twelve types of interplay between non-verbal and verbal modes, arguing that:

> With relation to the message that we wish to express verbally, our nonverbal behaviour can confirm it (e.g. a gesture that supports it visually), duplicate it (e.g. a gesture that repeats it), emphasise it (e.g. a tear that intensifies it), weaken it (e.g. a voice type that weakens its credibility) and even contradict it (e.g. a voice type that betrays exactly the opposite), but also mask it with other nonverbal signs that sort of camouflage it (e.g. pretending indifference in order to conceal the anxiety something is causing us). (2002b, p.54)

In other words, semiotic modes can reinforce or contradict each other to provide multimodal cohesion to the text. Building on Halliday's systemic functional grammar (SFG), Delu Zhang explores the relationship of modes in the Chinese context. Zhang (2009, p.26) identifies that language, visual image and sound are different modes in a multimodal text, and he argues that relationships between modes falls into two categories: complementary and non-complementary. A relationship between modes is 'complementary' if neither of the modes concerned fully expresses on its own the whole meaning (intension) of the discourse (Zhang 2009, p.26). Within this category, Zhang (2009, p.26) further distinguishes between a

reinforced relationship and non-reinforced relationship. The former refers to a situation where one mode is the major communicative form, while the other serves a minor role in expressing the meaning being communicated (Zhang 2009, p.26). A non-reinforced relationship, on the other hand, refers to a situation where the modes complement each other to express the meaning being communicated in such a way that none of them can be omitted (Zhang 2009, pp.26-27). Zhang and Poyatos agree that communication modes can reinforce each other. In comparison with Poyatos, Zhang's study makes no attempt to explain which mode (such as verbal mode or non-verbal mode) he is referring to in terms of semiotic interrelations. There is considerable ambiguity regarding the use of the term 'mode', and the use of generalisation to illuminate the relationships between modes is implausible.

Although Poyatos' study is fundamental to exploring the complex semiotic interrelations in communication, his classification of mode interactions is based on direct verbal communication. Additional studies are required in the area of subtitling to investigate whether the non-verbal mode fulfils the function (making meaning) through interaction with the verbal mode or as an independent semiotic mode in itself (Kaindl 2004, p.176). Following Poyatos, Kaindl (2004) and Zabalbeascoa (2008) explore the interplay of different semiotic resources in audiovisual texts. Kaindl (2004, p.176) sets out five distinct types of interplay between words and signs in translating comics:

1) Plays on words consisting basically of linguistic signs
2) Plays on words reinforced by non-verbal signs
3) Plays on signs that depend on a multimodal combination
4) Non-verbal plays on signs reinforced by verbal signs
5) Plays on signs consisting only of non-verbal elements.

In his study on the nature of audiovisual text and its parameters, Zabalbeascoa (2008, p.26) summarises five combinations of modes in audiovisual communication. These are verbal, more verbal than non-verbal, verbal and non-verbal to an equal degree, less verbal than non-verbal, and only non-verbal. Despite their different methodological approaches, Kaindl and Zabalbeascoa arrive at similar proposals regarding the semiotic interrelations within audiovisual texts.

These proposals shed light on how different modes contribute to humour. They have implications for the transfer of humour through the subtitling process. This thesis aims to elucidate the extent to which these different types of interplay are relevant to the translation of humour in Chinese comedies and arrive at a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of humour transfer in the subtitling of Chinese comedies for English-speaking audiences.

2.5.3   Multimodality: different approaches

Multimodality has been widely used in different disciplines (Stöckl 2004, pp.12-13, Taylor 2016, p.233). Generally speaking, research on multimodality can be divided into three groups: a social semiotic multimodal analysis represented by Kress and Van Leeuwen; an SFG approach to MDA associated with O'Toole, Baldry and Thibault, and O'Halloran; and multimodal interactional analysis (MIA) such as that of Scollon and Scollon, and Norris (Jewitt 2009b, pp.28-29). This section outlines these three approaches to multimodality and underlines the critical innovation of this thesis in using multimodality as a critical framework to improve our understanding of subtitling humour in Chinese comedies.

The first approach to multimodality is based on social semiotics. This school of thought encompasses the way in which processes of meaning-making shape individuals and society (Jewitt et al. 2016, p.58). As pioneers of this approach, Kress and Van Leeuwen use a social semiotic approach that has evolved from Halliday's social semiotics and SFG. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) examine the selection of different semiotic resources and how meaning is configured visually in certain social contexts. Their approach focuses primarily on how social semiotic resources are used in different communicative contexts such as teaching, learning, health and advertising. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, meaning-making is a process in which semiotic resources in context are in closely connected to other semiotic resources.

In the same vein, the second approach to multimodality, MDA, also derives from Halliday's SFG. However, unlike Kress and Van Leeuwen's social semiotics approach, MDA aims to offer a framework to understand the way in which semiotic resources integrate and create meaning

in multimodal artefacts. Among scholars representative of MDA, Baldry and Thibault widen the discussion on multimodality and conceptualise multimodality as "the diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both co-deployed and co-contextualised in the making of a text-specific meaning" (2006 p.21). They argue that different semiotic modes combine to make an overall meaning. Baldry and Thibault advance the theory of resource integration, proposing that "resources are not simply juxtaposed as separate modes of meaning making but are combined and integrated to form a complex whole which cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of the mere sum of its separate parts" (2006, p.18).

The third approach to multimodality is MIA, which foregrounds identity and interaction. MIA focuses on social action, interaction and identity from the perspective of multimodality (Jewitt et al. 2016, p.113). In MIA, interaction is not limited to the scope of language but accounts for the fact that interaction is mediated by how people use gesture, movement and gaze in specific contexts, and how space and artefacts mediate interaction (Jewitt et al. 2016, p.114). Norris (2009, p.88) argues that the existence of modes involves an intimate connection between the way that social actors use these phenomena and when and where they are used. In this regard, MIA is concerned with the interplay between communicative modes in a specific time and place in social interaction.

These different approaches to multimodality establish a crucial basis for investigating multimodality in the area of AVT in the context of Chinese humour. They underline that meaning-making involves a combination of different semiotic resources. However, some parts of these theories are irrelevant to this thesis, which seeks to account for the blind spots in multimedia theories through its case studies of Chinese comedy films. These blind spots relate specifically to the modes at play in the meaning-making process. Specifically, what lies at the heart of social semiotics is how semiotic resources are configured in a given context, but very little has been written about the interactions of modes to create meaning. This thesis seeks to rectify that. While MIA focuses on how different modes are formulated in social interaction, this thesis instead focuses on how interactions between semiotic modes generate humour. While its approach is inspired by MDA and Baldry and Thibault's framework, this thesis identifies and seeks to remedy a key omission of that framework. Multimodal transcription of visual components such as camera position, visual salience, and code orientation do not

account for the complex mechanisms of humour: that is, humour is evoked by the complete whole of modes working together. Humour transfer is a complex process due to the multimodal nature of humour. The way in which humour transfers are diverse. This means that humour can be replicated in the target culture by non-verbal elements or by linguistic resources, such as culturally specific references. Baldry and Thibault's approach is not comprehensive enough to explain how the verbal mode creates meaning in synergy with other modes in multimodal texts. As Daniel Chandler observes, "The primary and most pervasive code in any society is its dominant natural language" (2007, p.149). Consequently, additional study is required to understand more systematically and comprehensively the key components of multimodality. The next section presents the theoretical framework that underpins the examination of complex humour transfer in Chinese comedies. The section is divided into two parts. The first part outlines how I adopt the concept of multimodality and apply it to the context of subtitling humour in this study, while the second part sets out the specific taxonomy of humour needed to analyse the translation of humour in Chinese comedies.

2.6   Theoretical framework

This thesis explores the complex process involved in humour transfer through the subtitling of Chinese comedies. Because subtitles are polysemiotic texts and meaning-making in such audiovisual texts depends on the combined effects of verbal and non-verbal semiotic modes, this thesis takes a multimodal approach to consider all the modes involved in the construction of humour.

2.6.1   How this thesis uses multimodality

This thesis uses multimodality to understand and explore the semiotic complexity of the audiovisual texts in its case studies. This complexity is conveyed in two aspects: the number of modes in different channels (see Figure 2.2), and the process of mode integration. If we consider all elements, such as speech, gesture, facial expressions and music, in the process of meaning-making to be modes, multimodality refers to the use of these modes to create meaning. Film is a plurisemiotic medium. Each mode has the potential to produce meaning in

film. In audiovisual products, non-verbal modes such as gestures, facial expressions, paralanguage, sound effects and music accompany the verbal mode (linguistic semiotic resource). This thesis, with its focus on the subtitling of humour in Chinese comedies, will adopt concepts from the field of multimodality, such as modes and their interrelations, to explore the complex process of how semiotic resources interact to generate humour. This thesis investigates not only the verbal mode and its meaning in a specific cultural context, but also the way in which non-verbal modes accompany, reinforce or contradict the verbal mode to fulfil a communicative function in the meaning-making process. Table 2.3 gives details of semiotic modes in different channels in audiovisual texts.

	Acoustic channel	Visual channel
Verbal mode	Spoken language (film dialogue)	Written language (subtitles)
Non-verbal mode	Sound effects Music (melody, rhythm, tune) Paralanguage (tempo, pitch, intonation, rhythm)	Kinesic actions (gestures, facial expressions, bodily movement) Mise-en-scène (setting, props, lighting, costumes)

Table 2.3 Modes and channels in audiovisual texts

2.6.2   Categories of humour in the subtitling of Chinese comedy films

The classification of humour in Chinese comedies used in this thesis is based on the categorisations proposed by Chiaro (2010b), Zabalbeascoa (1996) and Martínez-Sierra (2006). Figure 2.3 outlines the taxonomy of audiovisual humour this study uses to explore the complex process of humour transfer through the subtitling of Chinese comedies.
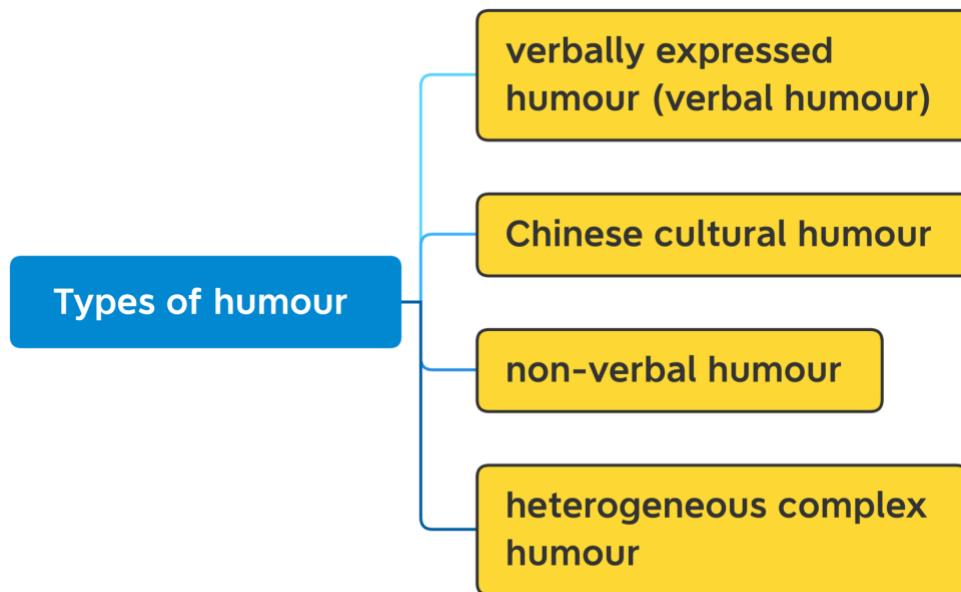
Figure 2.3 Types of humour in Chinese comedies

2.6.2.1   Verbally expressed humour

Chiaro and Piferi define VEH as "Any verbal form of attempt to amuse" (2010, p.285). VEH is divided into two sub-types: verbal humour and referential humour (Bucaria 2009, p.70). The former includes wordplay and puns,[33] and the latter encompasses the use of reference to trigger humour, such as cultural references and allusions (Bucaria 2009, pp.70-72). The translation of VEH is a difficult issue as it "involves matching the linguistic ambiguity in the source language (SL) with similar ambiguity in the target language (TL)" (Chiaro 2010b, p.1). Building on the current classifications of VEH, this study expands the discussion of verbal humour, making reference to the linguistic humour deriving from both spoken (acoustic channel) and written language (visual channel). Cultural references are frequently difficult to transfer to and understand in the receiving culture. Consequently, rather than considering cultural references as an element embedded in VEH, this study examines them separately and proposes that cultural references should come under a distinct category of cultural humour.

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[33] On the translation of wordplay and puns, see Delabastita 1993, Weissbrod 1996, Attardo 2002, Schröter 2004, Low 2011, Vandaele 2011.

It is noteworthy that Zabalbeascoa (1996) and Martínez-Sierra (2006) also use different terms to refer to VEH. The former uses "language-dependent humour" to refer to humour that depends on features of natural language for its effect, such as the translation of wordplay (polysemy and homophony). The latter suggests the use of linguistic elements. Both classifications, however, underscore the fact that humour arises from linguistic elements. Zabalbeascoa's and Martínez-Sierra's classifications overlap with Chiaro's VEH. This thesis uses Chiaro's term VEH to refer to linguistic humour. This is because Martínez-Sierra's approach is oversimplified, and it remains unclear exactly what the linguistic elements he refers to include. While Zabalbeascoa's language-dependent humour emphasises the close relationship between wordplay and humour, the question that remains unanswered is: what happens if humour is not generated by plays on words? Chiaro's VEH provides a broad enough definition for this thesis because it can encompass humour conveyed in both spoken and written forms.

2.6.2.2   Chinese cultural humour

Zabalbeascoa (1996), Martínez-Sierra (2006) and Chiaro (2006, 2010b) highlight the importance of considering cultural references in audiovisual texts. Zabalbeascoa's term "national-culture-and-institution jokes" accounts for the fact that national, cultural and institutional references can be a source of humour. Martínez-Sierra, on the other hand, links cultural humour to "Community-and-Institution Elements". This thesis uses the term 'Chinese cultural humour' instead of the general term 'cultural humour' to reflect its particular interest in the translation of humour in the Chinese context.

2.6.2.3   Non-verbal humour

Non-verbal humour is closely linked to physical humour (slapstick humour), bodily humour and deadpan humour (Nilsen and Nilsen 2000). The translation of non-verbal elements has received scant attention, and even fewer studies have been conducted on the translation of non-verbal humour in AVT (Bucaria 2009, p.67). Zabalbeascoa (1996, p.253), the first scholar to pay attention to extralinguistic humour in audiovisual texts (dubbing), defines visual humour as a type of humour that is either entirely visual or a visually coded version of linguistic humour. Despite this, his classification of visual humour is not precise enough as he

overlooks the fact that meaning is generated multimodally in audiovisual products, and that in AVT, humour results from the interaction between different modes (verbal modes and non-verbal modes). Based on Zabalbeascoa's classification, Martínez-Sierra (2006, p.291) expands the categories of visual humour, taking into account paralinguistic elements (rhythm, tempo, tone) and soundtracks in the acoustic channel. The analysis in this thesis uses this broader definition. This study also draws on Martínez-Sierra's taxonomy of paralinguistic elements and sound elements under the category of non-verbal modes in order to explore how different modes interact in the transfer of non-verbal humour in Chinese comedies. It is also worth mentioning that there is a type of non-verbal humour (surreal humour) which generates visual humour from the incongruity between what is presented on the screen and what exists in audiences' mind (cognitive process). Nonetheless, neither Zabalbeascoa nor Martínez-Sierra assess this category of non-verbal humour. This thesis fills that research gap.

2.6.2.4   Heterogeneous complex humour

In Zabalbeascoa's (1996, p.254) taxonomy of audiovisual humour, "complex humour" refers to cases where two or more different types of humour occur in the same example. Such is the range of humour types which can interact (e.g. dialect humour, cultural humour and wordplay), rather than using Zabalbeascoa's category, I refer to 'heterogenous complex humour' to reflect the complexity of humour transfer in multimodal film texts. Filmic text is innately multimodal. Humour often springs from the combination of different modes, i.e. it is generated multimodally. Certain types of humour (e.g. code-switching humour, dialect humour) depend on the combination of at least two modes and, when translated, are weakened if one of those modes is lost. Other instances of humour (e.g. acoustic humour) which depend on the coexistence of certain modes lose humour entirely if one mode is not translated. Humour combines differently across the multimodal spectrum.

 This new category (heterogenous complex humour) can account for all of the different combinations of humour identified in the Chinese comedy case studies. In the construction of humorous meaning, heterogeneous complex humour may conflate verbal and non-verbal humour, blend together verbal humour and Chinese cultural humour, or weave together

Chinese cultural humour and non-verbal humour. Figure 2.4 outlines the different combinations that constitute heterogeneous complex humour.
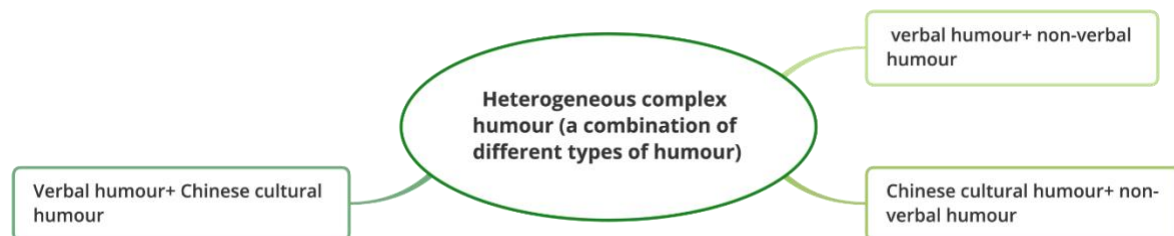
Figure 2.4 Heterogeneous complex humour

In summary, the humour classification that this thesis uses to examine the transfer of audiovisual humour in Chinese comedies is based on taxonomies proposed by Chiaro (VEH), Zabalbeascoa (national-culture-and-institution jokes and complex humour), and Martínez-Sierra (paralinguistic and sound elements). The humour categories used to analyse the case studies are VEH, Chinese cultural humour, non-verbal humour and heterogeneous complex humour.

Chapter 3 The translation of humour in the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008)

3.1   Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the complexity and translation challenges of humour transfer between the Chinese and English dialogue and the corresponding English subtitles in *If You Are the One*. The chapter works from the 2008 DVD officially released by Huayi Brothers Media Corporation/Media Asia Films (BVI), Beijing and Hong Kong. The film was a resounding success at the box office, becoming the second biggest Chinese-language film in history, with a gross of 44.22 million US dollars (RMB302 million) (Yu 2009). The work of renowned director Xiaogang Feng, this romantic comedy is of particular interest as a case study because of the complex, hybrid, multi-layered types of humour at its heart. Dialect humour is a key aspect of this case study. According to Li (2018, p.274), dialects are key to understanding Feng's films. Dialects are used to generate humour (Li 2018, pp.273-274). In this film, Feng uses various linguistic varieties (e.g. Beijing dialect, Sichuan dialect, Taiwanese Mandarin and Japanese) to provoke comic effects and satirise social issues. This chapter argues that *If You Are the One* is a key case study as a result of the complex ways in which humour is generated multimodally both in the original film and its subtitled version. This chapter examines the interplay of semiotic modes in the process of humour transfer by selecting and classifying representative examples in order to determine how well Chinese humour transfers to anglophone audiences. To do this, it analyses the translation strategies used for effective humour transfer.

3.2   The Context of *If You Are the One* (2008) in China and anglophone countries

The film focuses on a series of blind dates between Fen Qin and different women. Fen, the hero of the film, returns to China from the US, having not achieved much in his career and yet still become a millionaire after selling his 'invention' to a foolish but wealthy businessman. Having reaped this considerable fortune, he decides to transform his love life via online dating services.

The film attracted huge audiences in China, taking more than RMB325 million and becoming the box-office hit of 2008 (Faulkner 2016, p.128). The Douban Film website hosts more than 304,092 user reviews of the film, which averages 7.2 out of 10 (Douban Film 2008). Statistics from China's largest online film database, Mtime (2008), show that *If You Are the One* has been rated on average 7.2 out of 10 by 40,895 users. Both Douban and Mtime classify this film as a romantic comedy.

If You Are the One was released on 22nd December 2008 (IMDb, 2008). It was designed to be a Chinese New Year film. New Year comedies or *Hesui pian* (贺岁片) are released in December or during the appropriate holiday period to celebrate the lunar Chinese New Year (Xu and Xu 2013, p.134).[34] Xu and Xu (2013 p.135) explore the key place such films hold in New Year celebrations. New Year films tend to have humorous plots and happy endings (Xu and Xu 2013, p.134). *If You Are the One* was released at the end of a year in which China had suffered a snow disaster (January), a stock market crash (January-March) and an earthquake in Sichuan province (12th May). The Sichuan earthquake ranks as "one of the largest earthquakes in human history in terms of socio-economic losses" (BBC News 2013). In consequence, this film might be viewed as a reaction to the political and national context at the time of its creation, offering comic relief after a difficult year.

The success of the film stems not only from its humorous script, but also from the way in which the movie engages with major social issues in Chinese society. As one of the most famous directors in China,[35] Feng's work is characterised by a mixture of humour and incisive insights into issues in Chinese society (Zhang 2005, p.2). That this film speaks to a broad section of Chinese society is clear from its success. Berry (2012, p.89) argues that the film was successful in China precisely because it uses local comedy to make the film authentically Chinese in its broadest sense. The film focuses on ordinary people who in some ways become stereotypes of the China that Feng gently satirises: the extremely rich, pretentious but foolish investor, the nouveau riche, the sophisticated stock trader, the urban petty bourgeois and the

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[34] Lunar Chinese New Year is the most important festival in traditional Chinese culture. Its importance in China is equal to the Christmas holiday in many Western countries.

[35] Xiaogang Feng is among the most influential filmmakers in China (Ko 2017) and has directed many well-known Chinese comedies such as *If You Are the One* and its sequel *If You Are the One* (II), and the earlier *The Cellphone*.

smooth-talking saleswoman. Feng speaks to China authentically via his use of dialects (2012, p.89). The film uses both Beijing dialect and Southwestern dialect for the purpose of eliciting humour. This is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

If You Are the One also appealed to a huge audience in anglophone countries, in particular in North America. As *the Hollywood Reporter* (Lee 2009) suggests, overseas sales reached far beyond expected Chinese-speaking markets. The film took $53.7 million at the box office (Lee 2009). [36]Lee notes "Westerners wishing to get a taste of mainstream Chinese cinema will be pleasantly surprised" (Lee 2009). The film's popularity is easily explainable. Its genre enabled it to speak to anglophone audiences already comfortable with romantic comedies. Feng's film does play with its genre. Its title, 非诚勿扰, whose literal meaning is 'if you are not sincere, do not disturb', suggests that only sincere candidates should seek a blind date with the hero. Interestingly, nearly all the women the hero dates are insincere (an expectant single mother, an erotophobic widow, and a stock trader). The film, it might be argued though, is less successful in anglophone contexts. On IMDb, 2783 users have rated it 6.8 out of 10 (IMDb, 2008). Feng's humour is often dark and satirical in its focus on China in ways which do not always successfully translate to other national/linguistic contexts (Berry 2012, p.86). The film is thus a key case study for investigating the challenges of translating cultural humour in the context of subtitling (Lee 2009).

3.3   Romantic comedy

A romantic comedy is defined as "A film which has as its central narrative motor a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always to a successful conclusion" (McDonald 2007, p.9). Hollywood has a long history of making romantic comedies, dating back to the 1920s, with the work of Cecil B. DeMille and series of situational comedies from the 1920s considered to be precursors to the genre in its current form (Kuhn and Westwell 2012). As a genre, romantic comedy has been booming since the 1930s, and some subgenres have evolved, such as screwball comedy (1934-1942), sex comedy (1950s to 1960s), nervous romance (1970s), and new romance (1980s to 1990s) (Kuhn and Westwell 2012).

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[36] The discrepancy of the box-office is calculated over different time periods.

Despite its evolutions, in Hollywood, romantic comedy remains centred on finding love. *If You Are the One* undoubtedly conforms to this definition in that its male protagonist, Fen, is seeking an ideal partner. Humour arises on the path to the happy ending when Fen and a woman called Xiaoxiao establish a relationship. Romantic comedy is characterised by a lightness of tone and a narrative resolution governed by harmony, reconciliation and happiness, all of which shape the 'boy-meets-girl' story (Kuhn and Westwell 2012). These basic elements are often employed in Hollywood romantic comedies where the lovers-to-be first encounter each other in a way which predicts a happy ending (McDonald 2007, p.12). However, this Chinese film follows a different narrative structure from the typical Hollywood romantic comedy. The heroine (Xiaoxiao) does not fall in love with the hero (Fen) at first sight. Fen's kindness and care win Xiaoxiao's heart, which has been broken by a hopeless affair with a married man. According to Kong (2006, p.50), Chinese romantic comedies focus not only on romance but also on related social issues: women's social status, marriage and its basis. Consequently, the romantic comedy genre might be seen to work slightly differently in China than in anglophone markets.

Romantic comedy has an intriguing history as a film genre in China. As an artistic concept and creative style, it existed long before the 1920s (Kong 2006, p.50). The aesthetic tradition of Chinese romantic comedy originates from Chinese classical opera, and the most prevalent form of Chinese classical opera is romantic literature (Kong 2006, p.50). Romantic literary narratives served a pedagogical social function, illustrating that good triumphs over evil. Kong points out that the 1920s and 1930s were a key era for Chinese comedies, and *Labourer's Love*, released in 1922, is considered to be China's earliest romantic comedy film. Hollywood romantic comedy films influenced their Chinese counterparts throughout the 1930s and 1940s. For example, Chinese film of the time borrowed elements from screwball comedy, characterised by "Fast-paced farcical action, broad physical comedy, and combative dialogue" (Kuhn and Westwell 2012).[37] Between the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the implementation of the reform and opening-up policieis in 1978, romantic comedies served a useful political purpose. As Kong (2006, p.50) observes, such films

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[37] The Chinese film industry dates back to 1896 when the first film in China was screened in Shanghai (Zhu and Nakajima 2010, p.17). A Chinese-made film was first screened in 1905 (Zhu and Rosen 2010, p.1).

were used to eulogise the new society, or as an artistic medium to explore moral issues and behaviour.

Chinese romantic comedies have three key characteristics. Firstly, they focus on normal citizens and their daily life. Secondly, they are known for their on-screen dialogue, making extensive use of dialect and slang. Thirdly, on the path to a happy union, there are always dilemmas. This feature is closely associated with China's traditional philosophical value system, which advocates the importance of 'harmony in diversity' (和而不同) (Kong 2006, p.51). *If You Are the One* exemplifies each of these characteristics.

3.4 Types of humour in *If You Are the One*

Three different types of humour are clearly identifiable in *If You Are the One*: Chinese cultural humour, VEH and non-verbal humour. This section presents key examples to explore the powerful multimodal transfer of humour from the Chinese film through its English subtitles to anglophone audiences. It also specifically examines the seven parallel subcategories of humour identified within the category of VEH. The section analyses the interplay of different semiotic modes in order to explore the complexities and challenges in the process of humour transfer via subtitles.

3.4.1 Chinese cultural humour

Chinese cultural humour is a key component of *If You Are the One*. Feng's film mines humour from a range of references to Chinese folk culture and history. Translating these cultural references poses a key challenge to the subtitler with his/her limited space to communicate them to audiences whose Chinese cultural knowledge is not a given. The examples selected for this section underline both the nature of this challenge and the ways in which it may be met.

Example 1

Example background

Having posted a dating advertisement online, the male protagonist, Fen Qin, meets various women representing different types. The conversation transcribed in this example takes place when he meets a woman from an ethnic minority. Her appearance and clothes suggest that she is from a remote rural area of China. Fen and his date sit with a considerable distance between them. In this way, the director uses space to underline the failure of their date.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

秦奋：那咱俩要是结婚了，非得<u>倒插门儿</u>我去你们那儿吗？不去不行吗？要是咱俩不好了，能离婚吗？

相亲女：我哥哥会打断你的腿的。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen Qin: So, if we get married, must I be the <u>'live-in' son-in-law</u> in your family? I have to go, haven't I? If we have problems in this relationship, can we divorce?

Fen's date: My elder brother will break your legs.

English subtitles

Fen Qin: If we get married, I have to <u>go live with your family</u>? Can I refuse? If it doesn't work out between us, can we divorce?

Fen's date: My big brother will break your legs.

Screenshots

Figure 3.1 Author's screenshot depicting a woman from an ethnic minority (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.2 Author's screenshot depicting Fen's facial expression (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

There are two sources of humour in this example: the Chinese cultural reference to 'marry into and live with one's bride's family' ('倒插门') and the use of exaggeration to describe the aftermath of a divorce between Fen and his date. The phrase 'marry into and live with one's bride's family'('倒插门') is an idiomatic expression which is a clear instance of Chinese cultural humour. It is culture-specific slang and has a long history in Chinese culture. It references the fact that a son-in-law 'living in' is still a traditional marriage practice in rural areas of China. Specifically, it means that the husband lives in his wife's family's house with his in-laws when they get married. It has derogatory connotations in traditional Chinese culture and implies weakness and incompetence on the part of the groom. In many rural regions, especially in farming areas, families without a son of their own face a shortage of labour, which they may

solve through this practice. Men marry into and live with their bride's families when they are poverty-stricken and cannot afford the bride price demanded to marry the family's daughter. In this situation, when the couple has a child, he/she often takes the wife's family name rather than that of the father (Tang and Wang 2011, p.244). Being a 'live-in' son-in-law, to some extent, signifies a loss of dignity for men and exposes them to the mockery of others.

In the original film, the humour in this cultural reference lies in the absurdity and irony of a wealthy city man potentially becoming the 'live-in' son-in-law of a lower-class woman's family in the remote countryside. Fen's economically superior position means audiences laugh at the absurdity of him even contemplating being a 'live-in' son-in-law. The scene has a subversive intent in satirising the absurd and feudal perception of a male heir for the family of the bride in a rural area. It casts a satirical light on this traditional Chinese practice.

Broadly speaking, these elements of Chinese cultural humour and satire do not translate for anglophone audiences, who may have no knowledge that this concept of 'living in' even exists. In the English subtitles, the phrase is translated as "go live with your family". The subtitler attempts to achieve dynamic equivalence between the SL and TL. The phrase in the original Chinese is neutralised in the TL, and the derogatory connotation embedded in this slang is erased in the English subtitles. English-speaking audiences are likely to be unaware of the hidden cultural meaning of this reference. With different cultural backgrounds, English-speaking audiences' have different perceptions from Chinese viewers about the norms of a patriarchal marriage structure. There is a shift in how the target audiences understand 'live-in' son-in-law'. They would be unlikely to understand the phrase 'live-in-son-in-law' in the same way. Consequently, humour is transferred in a way that fails to communicate any of the ironic flavour of the proposed arrangement of a 'live-in' son-in-law to English-speaking audiences. This piece of cultural humour, which relies on specific cultural references and traditions, is lost in the TL.

The scene, though, remains funny in its subtitled form. The disjunction between the potentially romantic context and the potential violence in the woman's threat that her brother will break Fen's legs does translate. This verbal humour is reinforced by the stark contrast in the characters' facial expressions: the woman's stern look versus Fen's astonished and aghast

response (Figure 3.2). The situational humour that Fen's legs will be broken if they divorce transposes perfectly into the English subtitle because the TL audience comprehend and share both Fen's horror and the disjunction between this language and any romantic intent. As there is a direct equivalent expression of 'breaking one's legs' in the TL, the subtitler opts for a literal translation to preserve this instance of humour.

This example underlines the flexibility of humour. While it is multimodal in the Chinese original with its combination of Chinese cultural humour and the situational humour, this scene becomes more monomodal in its subtitled form because the Chinese cultural humour does not translate. However, the scene remains funny, successfully working in its subtitled form only from the verbal mode. In this example, the verbal mode reduces the impact of the loss of a non-verbal mode in the humour transfer.

Example 2

Example background

Fen is on a date with a woman whose husband has just passed away. She tells him that she is not worried about finding her husband because she knows where he is in the cemetery.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

秦奋: 你给找的地儿吧？

相亲女：颜春岭公墓。什么时候找什么时候在。

秦奋：那是，他要是跑了就成聊斋了。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen Qin: You found him a place?

Fen's date: Yanchunling Cemetery. Whenever I look for him, he is there.

Fen Qin: Yes, if he runs away, he will become _Liaozhai._

English subtitles

Fen Qin: You found him a spot?

Fen's date: Yanchun Ridge Cemetery. Whenever I need him, he's there.

Fen Qin: If he runs away now, you should <u>get your money back</u>.

Screenshots

Figure 3.3 Author's screenshot depicting Fen's happy facial expression (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.4 Author's screenshot depicting the woman smiling broadly (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

Fen's date in this scene calmly informs him that her husband is in Yanchunling Cemetery and that she can find him there whenever she needs him. Humour in the Chinese version stems from the use of *Liaozhai*, the euphemism used to describe him as a ghost. It teasingly avoids the embarrassment of a taboo topic on a date (death) and shows Fen's sense of humour. *Liaozhai* is an abbreviation of *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, which is a well-known work of literature in Chinese culture – a collection of ghost stories written by Songling Pu of the Qing Dynasty. It has gradually become a euphemism for ghosts in general. Although ghosts are normally associated with fear, they trigger amusement here. Both characters are familiar with *Liaozhai* and they smile when Fen uses this cultural reference (Figures 3.3 and 3.4).

The subtitler cannot translate the source cultural reference (*Liaozhai*) and instead uses a different expression ('get your money back'). This is what Chiaro refers to as "The replacement of the Source Language Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) with an example of compensatory VEH elsewhere in the Target Language text" (2010b, p.3). English-speaking audiences do not necessarily have access to the Chinese cultural knowledge that would make the concept of *Liaozhai* available to them. Baker (2011, p.29) points out the tendency in such contexts to replace culture-specific expressions with a TL item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the TL audience. While the

subtitles lose the cultural humour of their source in this instance, they are still funny. They generate humour by animating the inanimate, suggesting that should the dead husband walk ghostlike from his grave, the woman can ask for her money back for the cemetery space he no longer occupies. Humour stems from the incongruous privileging of the practical concern of money over the expected reaction of horror to the supernatural phenomenon of ghosts.

This example shows that the specificity of cultural humour is difficult to translate and that the subtitler often seeks more general ways to mediate the meaning of the dialogue. It also underlines that while humour depends largely on the verbal mode in this instance (subtitles), non-verbal modes such as facial expressions complement this, enabling the subtitler to mitigate some of the translation loss related to the loss of this culture-specific humour.

Example 3

Example background
Fen's date has been recently widowed. They discuss sex.

Chinese lines (subtitles)
秦奋：你不愿找一个结实的，身体棒的，非要找一个<u>软柿子</u>捏？
相亲女：<u>软柿子</u>才好吃呢!
秦奋：病秧子似的，年龄又大，你不担心婚姻的质量？你这个年纪，我直说啊，正是<u>如狼似虎</u>的年龄段儿啊。

Translation of Chinese subtitles
Fen Qin: You don't want to find a strong, healthy man, but a weak one, like a <u>soft persimmon</u>?
Fen's date: <u>Soft persimmons</u> taste delicious!
Fen Qin: An old, sickly guy. You're not worried about marriage quality? At your age, to be honest, women of your age have a higher <u>sex drive like wolves and tigers</u>.

English subtitles
Fen Qin: You don't want a strong, healthy body! You prefer a <u>soft marshmallow</u>?

Fen's date: <u>Soft marshmallows</u> taste better!

Fen Qin: But they're old and get sick easily. You're not worried about marriage quality? At your age... I'll be frank. You're at your <u>sexual peak</u>!

Screenshots

Figure 3.5 Author's screenshot depicting different facial expressions between Fen and his date (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.6 Author's screenshot depicting the indifferent facial expression of the woman (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

In Fen and his date's discussion of sex, the humour in the Chinese original is generated by two cultural references: 'soft persimmon' and 'sex drive like wolves and tigers'. Persimmons are fruit grown in some south-eastern Asian countries, such as China and Japan. Describing someone as a 'soft persimmon' implies that they are weak, small and may be easily dominated. It may also refer to a person who is socially underprivileged. Humour stems from the fact that the woman in this scene would actively seek a partner of this type. Her high-pitched voice conveys her contentment and satisfaction at the prospect of finding such a malleable partner, a satisfaction which flies in the face of the audience's expectation and creates humour

because soft persimmon in this context does not signify fruit. The woman's cheerful, delighted facial expressions contrast with Fen's confused, concerned face which, in visible physical terms, reinforces the cultural humour (Figure 3.5).

The subtitler attempts to achieve dynamic equivalence in the English subtitles by "replacing the source VEH with an idiomatic expression" (Chiaro 2010b, p.6) intended to elicit humour. As an exotic Asian fruit, persimmon is not universally recognised in the TL. Moreover, it does not have connotations of weakness and cowardice for English-speaking audiences. It is notable that a domesticating strategy is adopted in order to maintain the humour for the receiving culture, and 'soft persimmon' is translated as 'soft marshmallow'. This translation strategy illustrates Venuti's (2013, p.181) point that translators do not merely focus on rendering linguistic elements, such as words and expressions, but also pay attention to culturally specific meanings. Literally, 'soft marshmallow' refers to "a soft, often white candy made mainly of sugar" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'soft marshmallow'). However, marshmallow offers a slightly different message from persimmon. As a result of a marshmallow's calorific nature and flabby texture, use of the word implies that the woman is seeking a soft, sweet, out-of-shape man. The subtitler's attempt to make a cultural substitution in the subtitles works, but it evokes different, if equally humorous, resonances for the target audience.

Humour also stems from likening this woman's sex drive, in a culturally specific phrase, to the ferocity of wolves and tigers. In Chinese folk culture, this colloquialism is a euphemistic way to describe a rampant sex drive. Interestingly, the euphemism is age-specific. 'Wolves' is a term used to describe women's sexuality in their thirties; while in their forties, their sexual appetite is seen to be as voracious as a tiger's. Humour in the Chinese original stems from the inappropriate subject matter of the discussion and also from the disjunction between the language of rampant, ferocious sexuality and the woman's patent sexual apathy.

The English subtitles could maintain an animal reference because English uses the term 'cougar' to describe an older woman who preys sexually on younger male partners. However, as this term has age connotations relating to both partners which the source text does not,

there is a referential vacuum here.[38] The culture-specific image (wolves and tigers) is removed completely in the English subtitles. Instead, the subtitler captures the cultural connotation of the set phrase as 'You are at your sexual peak'. Via omission and explicitation, the subtitler makes it possible to transfer the semantic content to the TL. However, the subtitler's choice to use a declarative sentence to replace the culturally specific term erases the exaggerating effect which is key to the humour in the SL. As Low (2011, p.68) argues, for all its potential efficacy in conveying literal meaning, the explicitation of culturally specific phrases is problematic because removing obscurity or making something obvious leads to a loss of humour. Despite the subtitler's employment of effective translation strategies, the humorous impact of the TL subtitles is not as strong as that of the SL as a result of the loss of the culture-specific humour. Humour in the TL is largely dependent on non-verbal modes which predominate over the verbal mode. Again, non-verbal modes compensate to a certain degree for the loss of culture-specific humour in this instance. As can be seen in Figure 3.6, the woman is poker-faced after Fen questions her sexual apathy. In contrast, her face lights up ecstatically at the prospect of a sexually incapable husband (Figure 3.5).

On one hand, this example shows that cultural substitution is a potentially meaningful strategy in translating Chinese culture-specific humour when the SL and TL share a similar cultural item. However, it also underlines that a change of emphasis is almost inevitable with such cultural substitutions. While this example is driven by the verbal mode, the non-verbal mode at least partially compensates for the translation loss or referential vacuum in relation to the culture-specific humour. The interplay of different semiotic modes is irreplaceable in translation when a referential vacuum occurs, as can be seen in this case of subtitling a 'sex drive like wolves and tigers'.

3.4.2   Verbally expressed humour

3.4.2.1   Code-switching humour

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[38] The term 'referential vacuum' refers to a situation where no equivalent exists in the TL or a majority of the TL audience are unfamiliar with the item (Rabadán 1991, cited in Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p.201).

Code-switching can be a source of humour, as underlined by the scene in this example in which wealthy businessman Mr. Fan switches between Chinese and English. This scene serves a metatextual function in a film which is itself subtitled from Chinese into English. This example shows how subtitling code-switching in ways which preserve the humour poses key challenges to the subtitler.

Example 1

Example background

Fen meets a wealthy businessman, Mr. Fan, to pitch his invention to him.

Chinese lines

范先生：你看看我们是说英文呢，还是说中文呢？

奋：您定。您说哪个顺口说哪个，我都行。

范先生：那还是说母语吧。Nice to meet you.

奋：说母语？

范先生：哎呀，你看看我，这个经常不说母语已经不习惯了。见到你非常高兴，幸会。

Chinese subtitles

范先生：你看看我们是说英文呢，还是说中文呢？

奋：您定。您说哪个顺口说哪个，我都行。

范先生：那还是说母语吧。见到你很高兴。

奋：说母语？

范先生：哎呀，你看看我，这个经常不说母语已经不习惯了。见到你非常高兴，幸会。

Translation of Chinese lines (subtitles)

Mr. Fan: You see, we speak English or Chinese?

Fen Qin: You decide, whichever you speak smoothly. Both are OK.

Mr. Fan: Then speak our mother tongue. Nice to meet you.

Fen Qin: Speak our mother tongue?

Mr. Fan: Oops. Look at me. I don't speak often mother tongue, now I am not used to speak mother tongue. Nice to meet you. Pleasure.

English subtitles

Mr. Fan: Shall we speak English or Chinese?

Fen Qin: Your decision, whichever is more natural.

Mr. Fan: Then let's use our mother tongue. Nice to meet you.

Fen Qin: Our mother tongue?

Mr. Fan: Oops. Look at me. So used to English, I forget my own language. So nice to meet you. A pleasure.

Screenshots

Figure 3.7 Author's screenshot depicting Fen looking confused (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.8 Author's screenshot depicting Mr. Fan showing off (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

Code-switching humour appears in the Chinese lines when Mr. Fan asks Fen which language he would prefer to speak. Code-switching arises immediately after Mr. Fan agrees to speak Chinese, and humour results from the incongruity triggered by his sudden switch from Mandarin to English. He speaks English to show off and underline his international success as a businessman. We laugh at his conceitedness, and this humour is reinforced by the contrasting facial expressions of Fen and Mr. Fan. As shown in Figure 3.7, Fen looks confused and surprised by the lack of logic in Mr. Fan's actions. Mr. Fan is content with his superiority and delighted to be able to show off (Figure 3.8).

Code-switching between Chinese and English in the dialogue poses problems for the subtitler because the film as a whole is already being switched from Chinese to English in its subtitles. The transfer of code-switching humour to the TL is therefore unlikely to be as meaningful. The subtitler opts for dynamic equivalence to maintain the meaning of the Chinese original and provide the TL audience with an opportunity to perceive the humour. Given that humour is not created in isolation in the multimodal filmic text, the film works with other modes to compensate for the loss of the code-switching humour. In the English subtitles, humour relies heavily on the interplay of verbal modes and non-verbal modes. Mr. Fan explains the reason why he speaks English rather than Chinese, but comedy comes from his audible satisfaction at speaking the language he claims to slip into by mistake. Fen's bewildered facial expression amplifies this humour. Despite the loss of the code-switching humour, the scene remains funny as a result of its non-verbal elements.

This example suggests that while humour is maintained in the TL, it differs from that in the SL. The humour in the SL stems from very visible code-switching, while in the TL, humour is generated from a combination of verbal modes and non-verbal modes.

3.4.2.2   Phonological humour

Phonological humour falls under the category of VEH. In the following example, the humour is created through the use of homophones.

Example 1

Example background
Fen posts an online dating advertisement, in which he depicts himself as an overseas 'sea turtle' with few accomplishments.

Chinese lines
秦奋：实话实说应该定性为一只没有公司，没有股票，没有学位的三无伪海龟。

Translation of Chinese lines

Fen Qin: Honestly speaking, I am a spurious <u>overseas returnee</u> who has no company, no shares and no degrees. A 'three noes'.

Chinese subtitles

秦奋：实话实说应该定性为一只没有公司，没有股票，没有学位的三无伪<u>海龟</u>（海归）。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Honestly speaking, I am a spurious '<u>sea turtle</u>' (<u>'overseas returnee'</u>) who has no company, no shares and no degrees. A 'three noes'.

English subtitles

Fen Qin: I slacked and learned a few survival skills I've returned without accomplishment. Truthfully, I'm what they call a "Three Strikes" <u>returnee</u>: No company. No stocks. No degree.

Analysis

The Chinese subtitles are a different transcription of the Chinese lines containing the homophone *haigui* ('海归' 'overseas returnee' or '海龟' 'sea turtle'). This homophone works as a pun to the Chinese ear because it can be interpreted as either 'sea turtle' or 'overseas returnee' in the acoustic channel. Given its juxtaposition with the measure word '一只', *yizhi* ('a' or 'one' in English), homophony in the Chinese lines suggests a sea turtle rather than overseas returnee. This is because the collocation of the noun and the measure word in Mandarin Chinese is fixed, and Chinese syntax requires the measure word *yizhi* to follow certain types of animals, such as sheep, pig, dog, cat, bird and sea turtle. In the Chinese subtitles, the subtitler transcribes both meanings: 'sea turtle' and 'overseas returnee'. The transcription of 'sea turtle' is for the purpose of humour, as explained later in this section. As the syntax is muddled by using sea turtle to refer to a person, 'overseas returnee' is transcribed in brackets in the Chinese subtitles in order to avoid ambiguity.

There are two sources of humour in this example: mismatching register with *sanwu* ('three strikes') and wordplay on the homophone *haigui* ('sea turtle' and 'overseas returnee'). *Sanwu* literally means 'three noes'. It is often used in relation to products which have no expiry date,

no manufacturer details and no licence. It can also be used to describe migrant workers who have no legal resident identity card, no permanent address and no stable income. Humour results from the incongruous and ironic use of the word *sanwu* to describe the rich overseas returnee Fen. Humour also arises from the use of the homophone *haigui*. The term literally translates as the creature 'sea turtle'. However, its metaphorical use generates humour. The irony comes from the context of the contemporary social trend in China where some people spend a short time studying overseas without acquiring much knowledge yet blow their own trumpet when they come home as a successful returnee. Humour arises if contrast or incongruity exist between what is said and what can be implied from the context (Pelsmaekers and Eesien 2002 p.243). In this case, the overseas returnee Fen defining himself as a 'sea turtle' in his dating advertisement triggers incongruity. What prompts laughter is the fact that his reference to himself as a 'sea turtle' clashes with his real status as an intelligent millionaire who has successfully sold his invention to make a huge profit. His behaviour, refined manners and witty conversation throughout the film show that he is not as he describes himself in the advertisement. Moreover, his use of 'spurious' ('伪' 'fake') to describe himself as a useless returnee makes us laugh. This is because the word is often used to describe counterfeit coins, documents and evidence. The mismatch between this language and what the audience knows about Fen augments the incongruous effect. However, all of these effects are only accessible by the Chinese audience.

The English subtitles are not a faithful translation of either the Chinese lines or subtitles. The subtitler's verbal choices are not simply linguistic, but also take context into account. Humour around the term *sanwu* is successfully transferred through the strategy of adaptation. In the example English subtitles, *sanwu* is adapted to 'three strikes'. The etymology of this phrase has two related strands. It can refer to the game of baseball, in which if you fail to strike the ball three times, you are out, or it can refer to company policy whereby you are fired after three consecutive mistakes. The humour in the Chinese homophone 'sea turtle' cannot be translated directly because it has no English equivalent in terms of either meaning or wordplay. Moreover, anglophone cultures do not necessarily have the same social phenomenon of 'overseas returnees'. As Schröter (cited in Chiaro 2010b, p.142) suggests, translators need to decide what strategy to adopt in rendering wordplay. In this case, the subtitler translates the

homophone *haigui* ('sea turtle' or 'overseas returnee') as 'returnee'. A strategy of literal translation is employed in order to transfer meaning from the SL even though it means a loss of the wordplay. According to Gottlieb, "Loss of wordplay is easily felt as a loss of the very cause of laughter" (1997, p.216). This is clearly the case in this example.

This example shows that when humour is only verbal in its generation, the risk of humour loss in the subtitling is high if the humour is based on wordplay. While elements of the humour from the clear mismatch between the hero's true status and his description of himself in his dating advert remain, the play on words is not replicable, and the humour of this scene transferred through the subtitles is less multimodal.

3.4.2.3 Set expression humour

Set expression humour refers to humour that relies on Chinese set phrases. These phrases often comprise four Chinese characters, and frequently originate from historical events and stories. They pose clear challenges for subtitlers and underline why Chinese case studies are so important to debates in subtitling theory.

Example 1

Example background
Fen summarises his dates with different types of women and expresses his disappointment.

Chinese lines (subtitles)
秦奋: 但凡长得有模有样看着顺眼的，不是性冷淡就是身怀鬼胎。

Translation of Chinese subtitles
Fen Qin: Whoever looks kind of good and is pleasing to the eye are neither sexually apathetic nor pregnant with a ghost/(with ulterior motive).

English subtitles
Fen Qin: But the good-looking ones are either hiding something or hate sex.

Analysis

'With ulterior motive' ('身怀鬼胎') is a set expression which functions as a pun in this case because of its links with the set phrase 'have sinister motives' ('心怀鬼胎'). Humour in the SL is generated by the fact that the majority of the hero's dates 'have sinister motives', seeking not the true love Fen is searching for, but money, security and sexless, loveless marriages. 'With ulterior motive' ('身怀鬼胎') literally means a woman is pregnant with a ghost foetus. One of Fen's dates is literally a pregnant woman seeking a husband to be the father of her unborn child. Linguistic humour arises from the play on words, and ironic humour from the disparity between Fen's dreams of love and the reality of his dates.

By using the strategy of substitution, the English subtitles achieve dynamic equivalence between the SL and TL, yet they are ultimately unable to maintain the humour of the SL. The subtitler translates the set expression as 'hiding something' which is a non-punning phrase and eliminates the humour.[39] As Qian (2000, p.64) observes, the subtitling of puns poses a huge challenge for subtitlers because the transfer of a pun into the TL can make it boring or incomprehensible. In this instance, the transposition of SL humour to the TL depends only on the verbal mode, and the wordplay on the set expression cannot operate through the interplay of other modes. A modicum of humour remains in the disjunction between the hero's expectations of love and the reality of his dates, but this is clearly less potent than the full combination in the source filmic text.

3.4.2.4   Sexual humour

Sexual humour poses challenges for the subtitler because cultural attitudes to it vary between China and the anglophone world. In the selected example, the tricky balance between explicit and implicit sexual references is telling.

Example 1

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[39] Delabastita (1996a, p.134) proposes seven strategies for the translation of puns: SL pun to TL pun, SL pun to TL non-pun, SL pun to TL related rhetorical device, SL pun to TL literally translated pun, SL pun to TL omission, SL non-pun to TL compensatory pun, and SL non-pun to TL pun not present in SL.

Example background

Fen and his date discuss the topic of sex. They are having the conversation next to the swimming pool.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

相亲女：您觉得爱情的基础就是性吗？

秦奋：不完全是。可要是没有，肯定不能叫爱情顶多叫交情。

相亲女：您这我就不同意。没有怎么了？照样能白头到老啊。哦，我当然的意思也不说完全不能有。就是……别太频繁。

秦奋：那你认为多长时间<u>亲热一回</u>算是不频繁呢？

相亲女：这是我的理想，啊。

秦奋：恩，你说。一个月一次？

相亲女：一年一次。您要是同意了，咱们再接着往下接触。

秦奋：我不同意。我明白你丈夫为什么不回家了。咱俩(儿)要是结婚了，你也找不到我住哪儿。可惜了！

相亲女：<u>那事(儿)</u>就那么有意思吗？

秦奋：有啊。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Woman: Do you think love is based on sex?

Fen Qin: Not entirely. Without it, it's not love but friendship.

Woman: I disagree. A couple can still grow old together without sex. I don't mean there is no sex at all. I mean… It shouldn't be too frequent.

Fen Qin: How often is not too frequent of <u>affection time</u> in your opinion?

Woman: This is my ideal.

Fen Qin: Go ahead. Once a month?

Woman: Once a year. If you agree, we can continue meeting.

Fen Qin: I don't agree. No wonder your husband wouldn't come home. If we get married, you won't know where I live. What a pity!

Woman: <u>That thing</u> is so interesting?

Fen Qin: Oh, yes.

English subtitles

Woman: So you believe sex is the foundation for love?

Fen Qin: Not entirely. But love without sex is not love. At the most, it's only friendship.

Woman: I don't agree. What's wrong with no sex? Many people grow old together without it.

Of course, I don't mean to imply no sex at all. Just… not too frequently.

Fen Qin: Tell me, what's your idea of 'not too frequently'?

Woman: Ideally speaking…

Fen Qin: Yes? Once a month?

Woman: Once a year. If you agree, then we can meet again.

Fen Qin: I don't agree. I know why your husband never came home. If we got married, then I'd be hard to find too. Too bad.

Woman: Is <u>sex</u>… really all that interesting?

Fen Qin: Oh, yeah.

Screenshots

Figure 3.9 Author's screenshot depicting a quizzical look of Fen's date (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.10 Author's screenshot depicting Fen looking surprised (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.11 Author's screenshot depicting an embarrassed smile of Fen's date (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.12 Author's screenshot depicting Fen looking impatient (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.13 Author's screenshot depicting the woman looking very pleased (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.14 Author's screenshot depicting the woman's hand gesture (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.15 Author's screenshot depicting Fen looking at the woman with a frown (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.16 Author's screenshot depicting a man jumping into the swimming pool (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.17 Author's screenshot depicting Fen looking disappointed (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.18 Author's screenshot depicting the woman looking happy with a smile (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

Humour in this instance results from the public discussion of sex and the way in which Fen and his date talk about it. Their starkly different attitudes to sex trigger comedy. Sex is a taboo topic in Chinese society and has been for thousands of years, according to Zhou: "Open attitudes toward sexuality will instantly conjure up images of smut and licentiousness" (2015). Many Chinese people are influenced by traditional culture and have a conservative view of sex. According to traditional Chinese culture, sex belongs to an individual's private sphere, so discussing it in public triggers embarrassment. As Yuan (2015, p.28) suggests, many people feel shame about the topic of sex and refrain from mentioning it, particularly in public. In this scene, Fen and his date exchange views about the taboo topic of sex without any embarrassment, but they are able to do so because they talk euphemistically. In the Chinese

dialogue, they replace the phrase 'having sex' with '亲热一回' ('affection time') and '那事儿' ('that thing'). Humour stems from the characters covertly having an overtly sexual discussion.

Humour in this situation chiefly relies on the verbal mode. However, the non-verbal modes which accompany the conversation between Fen and his date amplify the humour. A quizzical look from the woman triggers Fen's query about sex (Figure 3.9). When she claims 'Many people grow old together without it [sex]', she does so with a fast and high-pitched voice to show how quickly she wants the conversation (and the sex act it describes) to be over. Her response surprises Fen so much, it renders him speechless (Figure 3.10). His surprised facial expression reinforces the verbal mode with its own comic effect. As Morreall (1987, p.130) suggests, humour occurs if something violates our expectations. In this scene, Fen is as surprised as the viewers, but we laugh whereas he does not. We have the benefit of distance from the conversation which does not affect our life. When the woman notices Fen's expression of surprise, she adds, with an embarrassed smile, that sex should not be frequent (Figure 3.11) in order to reassure him that it is still a possibility, however infrequent. Humour is then created by the striking contrast between the characters' respective facial expressions, as shown in Figures 3.12 and 3.13. Fen shows his impatience by turning his head away to look at something else (Figure 3.12) while asking the woman what frequency she suggests. In contrast to Fen's impatient facial expression, the woman looks very pleased and excited when talking about limiting sex (Figure 3.13). Rather than using verbal communication, she answers with a hand gesture for 'one' (Figure 3.14). It is interesting to note that no subtitles accompany her gesture. This is because the Chinese audience and English-speaking audience share an understanding that this hand gesture represents the numeric value of one. This demonstrates that in a multimodal filmic context, non-verbal modes (gestures) can affect the subtitler's choice of strategies, such as using omission or supplementation, to transfer meaning from the SL to the TL. What makes Fen disgruntled and frown (Figure 3.15) is his deduction that the woman's hand gesture signifies once a month. Humour is then created by his astonishment when the woman reveals that her ideal frequency for sex is once a year. The comic effect engendered by the verbal mode continues to be reinforced by non-verbal modes through the sharp contrast between their different facial expressions. It is interesting to note that following the utterance 'once a year', there is a cutaway to a shot of a man jumping into the

swimming pool (Figure 3.16). This metaphorically references the way in which Fen's sexual ardour is effectively doused by his date's clarification. Different sound effects can interact with or evaluate other events in the auditory mode or some other modality to extend meaning (Baldry and Thibault 2006, p.210). While sound effects are not used extensively as a mode in this film, a sound effect here (a splash from the pool) metaphorically extends the scene's humour. Moreover, the verbal humour is contradicted by kinesic action and paralanguage. As soon as the woman declares that her desired frequency for sex is once a year, Fen covers his face with his hands, bows his head in meditation and sighs heavily (Figure 3.17). Fen's reaction involves disappointment. However, the woman fails to perceive Fen's negative emotions and even suggests with a smile that they could continue meeting (Figure 3.18). Humour is therefore elicited by the interplay of the verbal mode with non-verbal modes (kinesic action, facial expressions and paralanguage) which contradict each other. The date has clearly failed though the woman's happy and excited facial expressions indicate that she has not realised this. Her statement, 'If you agree, we can continue meeting', therefore makes the audience laugh because, like Fen, we realise just how mismatched this pair are. At the end of this scene, further humour is triggered by the interplay of the paralinguistic mode and the background music. The woman's voice is high-pitched when she complains that sex is not interesting. Her feelings are echoed by the slow and melancholic background music, which simultaneously reflects her low sexual appetite and Fen's negative reaction to the date.

The scene's humour is retained in the English subtitles to a meaningful degree. However, the euphemistic expressions that refer to having sex are translated less euphemistically in the English subtitles. The subtitler renders '那事儿' ('that thing') from the Chinese original as 'sex'. Rather than translating '亲热一回' ('affection time') from the SL in the English subtitles, the subtitler adopts a strategy of omission and translates the relevant phrase as 'What's your idea of not too frequently?', which ensures the central meaning is transferred. While all the other types of humour from the Chinese source text are maintained, the euphemistic humour disappears as it is not as culturally specific to an anglophone context. The subtitler makes clear cultural choices.

3.4.2.5   Dialect humour

China is home to multiple dialects, and the rendering of those dialects when used in film requires careful thought from the subtitler. The range of dialects this film's hero encounters on his dates underlines just how extensive his search for love is. The examples in this section trigger humour from complex interactions between geographical dialects. In Example 1, Fen speaks the Beijing dialect. The use of this dialect is characteristic of Feng's comedy (Zhao 2014, p.66). Southwestern dialect is explored in Example 2.

Example 1 Beijing dialect

Example background

Fen meets one of his dates, a Taiwanese single mother, in a tea house.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

相亲女：我爷爷就是北京人啊，我最喜欢听他讲话了，"这是怎么回儿事儿？"。

奋："回"不加儿因，"事"加儿因，"怎么回事儿"。

相亲女："怎么回事儿？"

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen's date: My grandfather is Beijingese. His pronunciation is my favourite. "What is the matter?"

Fen: *Erhua* does not lie on *hui* ('return'). It lies on *shi* ('matter'). "What is the matter?"

Fen's date: "What is the matter?"

English subtitles

Fen's date: My grandfather is from Beijing. I love hearing his accent. "What is go-ING on?"

Fen: The accent is on the last word, not on the one before last. "What is going ON?"

Fen's blind date: "What is going ON?"

Screenshots

Figure 3.19 Author's screenshot depicting Fen's wry smile (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

Fen's date pronounces *Erhua* (rhotacisation) wrongly, which becomes a source of humour. The Beijing dialect is known for its heavy use of the 'r' sound at the end of nouns. However, rather than adding *Erhua* at the end of a noun, the woman pronounces the 'r' sound before the noun, which triggers Fen's laughter. The Beijing dialect is spoken in China's capital, Beijing, and it is the basis for Modern Standard Chinese (*Putonghua* or common language) (Chen 1993, pp.507-508). The different dialects the characters speak in this scene underline the cultural and personal differences which divide them. They do not speak the same actual language or the same language of love.

The first instance of humour triggered by the Beijing dialect is a result of the influence of 'jerk humour'. This form appeared in Beijing in the early 1980s and is associated with Shuo Wang, a pioneer of jerk literature (Yue 2010, p.406). A characteristic feature of jerk humour is the use of cynical and sarcastic deprecation of the self and others (Yue 2010, p.406). Wang makes frequent use of the Beijing dialect in his writing (Hu 2005, p.14). The characters in his works are ruffians who speak glibly in the Beijing dialect, to humorous effect (Hu 2005, p.15). In Wang's work, the Beijing dialect represents rebellion, satirising orthodox thinking and teaching in China (Yue 2010, p.406). His jerk humour has therefore become very popular among young people (Yue 2010, p.407). Fen, as shown in previous examples, is self-deprecating about his considerable achievements. Thus, both the content of his dialogue and the dialect in which he expresses it tap into the recognisable traditions of jerk humour.

Moreover, humour stemming from the Beijing dialect works in close connection with *Xiangsheng*. *Xiangsheng*, or crosstalk, is a traditional Chinese comedic art performed as a monologue or dialogue (Yue 2010 p.407). The name literally refers to 'face and eye'. The history of the form dates back to the middle of the 18th century. It was originally popular in Beijing and Tianjin, from where it gradually spread throughout China (Ge 2011, p.48). *Xiangsheng* encompasses three forms of performance, which are stand-up comedy, two-person comic crosstalk and multiple-person performance. All three combine the same four techniques: speech, mimicry, comedy and song (Liu and Yang 2010, p.26). *Xiangsheng* often provokes laughter through use of the Beijing dialect and local, colloquial flavours (Liu and Yang 2010, pp.25-26). As many famous *Xiangsheng* artists were born in Beijing, humour is delivered with the Beijing dialect whose distinctive feature is rhotacisation (*Erhua*). "As an emblem of Beijing vernacular style, rhotacisation (Erhua) is a phonological process involving the syllable final[40] in which the subsyllabic retroflex [ɹ] is added to the final," (Zhang 2008, p.207). *Erhua* is a specific linguistic phenomenon transmitted in the acoustic channel in most cases.[41] In comparison with non-rhotacised Standard Mandarin, *Erhua* can narrow the gap between performers and audience because it is characterised by its smoothness, sonority and casualness. The hero's use of the Beijing dialect and discussion of *Erhua* therefore directly situates this scene as comedy by tapping into *Xiangsheng* traditions.

The humour triggered by the Beijing dialect in the acoustic channel may not be identified and appreciated by English-speaking audiences who have limited or no understanding of the Chinese language. Humour, to some extent though, is sustained thanks to the combined effect of different modes. The non-verbal modes in the visual channel can compensate for the loss of dialect humour. In Figure 3.19, in recognition of his blind date's incorrect use of *Erhua*, Fen's wry smile is in perfect cohesion with the English subtitles as he corrects his date's mistake. The English subtitles use different font styles (hyphenating and capitalising the use of *Erhua*) such as "go-ING" and "ON" to draw the attention of TL audiences to this distinctive feature of the Beijing dialect. The strategies implemented by the subtitler not only ensure successful

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[40] The 'final' is a term used in the study of Chinese phonology. It refers to the nucleus and coda of a syllable, also known as the syllable rhyme.
[41] *Erhua* can also be used in the written language depending on the style of the text. This thesis focuses on how *Erhua* produces humour in Chinese dialogue via the acoustic channel, rather than considering it as a written form.

transfer of the scene's content, but also pave the way for a greater understanding of humour associated with linguistic varieties. Humour is maintained in the TL, albeit with a shift for TL audiences, in that humour is replicated in the TL visually from the acoustic mode of the SL. As this example shows, dialect humour can be transferred, but it needs to be translated visually in the subtitles via different font styles and hyphens rather than acoustically.

Example 2 Southwestern dialect

Example background

Fen goes on a date with a cemetery saleswoman who speaks a Southwestern dialect.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

相亲女：其实这也是一种投资，你只要出三万块钱就可以买到一块皇家风水宝地的墓地。三万块，也就是你往返美国的一张机票钱，等过几年同样的一块墓地就可以卖到三十万，到那时候你再转手把它一卖，就可以赚十倍。

秦奋：等会儿，我卖了，我妈我爸埋哪啊？

相亲女：你可以买两块啊，你要是买两块的话，我们公司可以给你打九五折。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Woman: In fact, this is an investment. You just spend 30,000 yuan getting an imperial fengshui burial plot. Thirty thousand yuan, which is just a return ticket to the US. After a couple of years, the same burial plot can be sold for 300,000. By that time, when you sell it, you can make ten times profit.

Fen Qin: Hang on, if I sell it, where will my parents be buried?

Woman: Then you can buy two. If you buy two, you can get 5% discount from our company.

English subtitles

Woman: It really is a great investment; just thirty thousand yuan gets you a grave plot with imperial fengshui. Thirty thousand! Price of a return trip to America. In just a few years, the same plot will be worth three hundred thousand. By the time you sell it, you'll have made 1000% profit.

Fen Qin: Hold on. If I sell it, where will my parents go?

Woman: You can buy two! If you buy two plots, my company will give you a 5% discount.

Screenshots

Figure 3.20 Author's screenshot depicting the woman looking determined (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.21 Author's screenshot depicting Fen looking confused (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.22 Author's screenshot shows that Fen is speechless (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

Humour in this instance is generated by the Sichuan dialect and the attempts by Fen's date to sell a burial plot to the man she is supposed to be wooing. The Southwestern dialect is also classified as Southwestern Mandarin, a subgroup of the varieties of Mandarin (Cai 2013, p.18). It is spoken mainly in the southwestern part of China, such as Sichuan and Yunnan provinces and Chongqing municipality. The Southwestern dialect shares phonological similarities with Standard Mandarin. The use of the Southwestern dialect serves a humorous purpose here because it is characterised by an accent that is often deemed vulgar, rural and inferior to other dialects (Liu 2018, p.90). This is because the southwest of China is home to multiple ethnic minorities who live far from the big cities. Moreover, Peng (2015, p.41) argues that this dialect traditionally using expletives to release negative emotions. The Southwestern dialogue in this scene triggers humour because it taps into the stereotypes of the region in a comedic moment which is part potential date, part sales pitch for a burial plot.

From a linguistic perspective, the humour of the Southwestern dialect is manifested in the initials and finals.[42] In the phrase "It really is an investment" ('其实这也是一种投资'), the

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[42] 'Initials' and 'finals' are elements of Chinese Pinyin. A Chinese syllable contains three different components: an initial, a final and a tone.

underlined Chinese character *shi* ('be') is pronounced as [s] in Southwestern dialect, but is [ʂ‘] in Mandarin Chinese. The exaggerated non-standard pronunciation (compared with Standard Mandarin) creates a humorous effect, audibly locating this woman in a geographical and stereotypical context.

However, dialect humour does not work in isolation in this scene. Rather, it combines with the situation and non-verbal modes to generate humour. The situation is humorous because of the element of surprise. The woman asks for some basic information about Fen's family members, which in China is considered normal on a date. Her real intention, however, is to use this information to sell him a burial plot. What amuses the audience most is her outrageousness in seeking to sell not one but two plots by offering Fen a 5% discount. During the process of her trying to sell the plot(s), the contrast in the facial expressions of the two characters reinforce the humour. The woman looks determined when suggesting Fen buys one plot (Figure 3.20), while he is confused and says, "Hang on, if I sell it, where will my parents be buried?" (Figure 3.21). The woman immediately suggests that he buys two with a 5% discount. Fen is so shocked, he is speechless (Figure 3.22). Joyful waltz music plays to intensify the comic effect. Humour stems from the mismatch between the intentions of the two individuals on the date.

The subtitler opts to translate the SL literally in the English subtitles. It is notable that "fengshui",[43] a Chinese cultural reference, is retained in the English subtitles. Berman argues that "translation is a trial for the foreign"(2012, p.240). He believes that foreignisation is an effective approach to reinforce the power of a translation, providing opportunities for the TL viewer to explore the authentic SL (Berman 2012, p.240). Fengshui is at the root of Chinese culture, and the subtitler's choice to retain its foreignness does not affect or weaken the comic effect in the TL, as the humour in this instance does not rely on understanding the cultural reference. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the subtitler deliberately changes the expression to make the amount sound bigger and provides a translation of the Chinese original "You can make ten times profit" into English as "You'll have made 1000% profit". This

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[43] As Bruun (2003, p.vii) suggests, fengshui has been globalised, while its centre of activities remains China. Consequently, it is culturally legible for anglophone audiences (Bruun 2003, p.1).

is for the purpose of provoking humour.[44] In spite of the loss of the dialect humour, humour is partially maintained in the English subtitles. The situation and non-verbal modes still trigger a humorous reaction in English-speaking viewers. This confirms that in the multimodal filmic context, modes can work together in complex ways to evoke humour. This example also suggests that the translation of dialect humour is possible. However, it does require a high level of creativity from the subtitler to recreate the humour successfully.

3.4.2.6 Rhetorically generated humour

Example background

Fen describes himself in a dating advertisement.

Chinese lines

秦奋：你要想找一帅哥儿就别来了，你要想找一钱包儿就别见了。

Chinese subtitles

秦奋：你要想找一帅哥就别来了，你要想找一钱包就别见了。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen Qin: If you would like to find a handsome guy, don't come. If you would like to find a wallet, don't bother.

English subtitles

Fen Qin: Looking for hot guys? Don't bother. No gold-diggers either.

Analysis

Humour derives from the use of rhetorical devices (antithetical parallelism and metaphor) in this instance. Antithetical parallelism is key in this example. The structure of the two Chinese sentences is grammatically the same and written in rhyme, ending with the same final [e],

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[44] The subtitler expressed in a differed way in terms of the calculation, which is for the purpose of triggering humour. If Fen made 30,000 yuan on top of his initial outlay, that would be 100% profit so 300,000 is 1000% profit, which is the same as a tenfold increase on his investment: 10 x 30,000 (10% of 30,000 would only be 3,000 yuan profit).

which sounds humorous and melodious to the Chinese ear. Furthermore, humour depends on the use of metaphor as a way of satirising women who have non-romantic intentions with regard to their dates. "Wallet" is the metaphorical word which expresses Fen's unwillingness to meet someone who only wants him for his money. The humour is intensified through use of the Beijing dialect, as the words for "handsome guy" and "wallet" are spoken with *Erhua*.[45]

Humour is largely sustained in the TL. The strategy adopted by the subtitler meaningfully recreates a rhyme in the English subtitles by using "bother" and "either". However, the humour based on antithesis is diminished in the TL due to the linguistic difference between the SL and TL. Humour is maintained in the English subtitles by using the colloquial expressions "hot guys" and "gold-diggers" to replace "handsome guy" and "wallet" in the SL. 'Gold digger' is a common colloquial expression to describe "Someone, usually a woman, who tries to attract a rich person, usually a man, in order to get presents or money" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'gold digger'). By using "gold-diggers", the English subtitles translate the connotation of "wallet" and arrive at dynamic equivalence between the SL and TL. This example underlines the complexities of transferring verbal humour because it preserves the humour in Fen's verbal expression of his blunt approach to love but loses the dialect humour of the Beijing dialect. It underscores that it is possible to transfer some elements of verbal humour but lose others.

3.4.2.7   Domain-mismatch humour

Domain-mismatch humour refers to words or terms from one domain (e.g. economic, political or legal) generating humour when they are used in a context with which they do not. Laughter is generated from the conflict between the audience's understanding of a term's original meaning and its relocation to an inappropriate domain. The humour examined in the examples in this section involves the economic and political domains.

Example 1 Economic domain

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[45] The two sentences are selected from Fen's dating advertisement, and Fen speaks them with the distinctive Beijing accent. This can be seen in the use of *Erhua* and the omission of the measure word '个'.

Example background

On one of his dates, Fen meets a stock trader. They discuss their potential relationship using words related to stocks and shares. This example echoes the stock market turbulence in China in the year of the film's release.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

秦奋：那……我应该算一只业绩怎么样的股票呢？

相亲女：从年龄上长相上看，应该属于<u>跌破发行价</u>的那种吧。

秦奋：要是没人看得上，就有<u>摘牌儿</u>的危险了是吧？

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen Qin: So… If I were a stock, how would I rate?

Woman: Judging from age and appearance, you've <u>sunk below your offer price</u>.

Fen Qin: So, I'm in danger of being <u>delisted</u> if no one fancies/chooses me?

English subtitles

Fen Qin: If I were a stock, how would I rate?

Woman: Judging from age and looks, you've <u>sunk below your offer price</u>.

Fen Qin: So, I'm in danger of being <u>delisted</u>?

Screenshots

Figure 3.23 Author's screenshot depicting the woman's facial expression (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.24 Author's screenshot depicting the woman's smiley facial expression (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

Humour in this instance is generated by the metaphorical way in which Fen's date assesses his value in monetary terms. Specifically, the woman uses the terms of the stock exchange to evaluate Fen's value in the marriage market, suggesting he has "sunk below [his] offer price". The comparison between looking for a partner and trading stocks and shares is funny and also speaks to ordinary people's daily life in the wake of the Chinese stock market crash in 2008 when the film was released in China. Trading stocks is both risky and potentially profitable, just like looking for a partner via a blind date. Fen's date uses financial vocabulary, oblivious to the fact that Fen has suggested in his dating advertisement that he finds an obsession with money unappealing. She may not be a gold digger, but she nevertheless assesses the film's hero in terms of profit and loss. The metaphorical and exaggerated way in which his date

compares him to a stock that has fallen in value implies that she finds Fen unattractive and does not like him. Additional humour emerges when Fen self-mockingly replies with his own stock-related term, "delist". In its proper context, the term means "to stop a company's shares being traded on a stock market" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'delist'). Fen's self-deprecating humour even amuses the woman (Figure 3.23) despite her lack of interest in him. This lack of interest is underlined by the woman's changing facial expressions in Figures 3.23 and 3.24, which humorously underline her contempt and amusement at Fen's appearance.

The English subtitles adopt an approach of dynamic equivalence which allows the SL's comic effect to be transferred to the TL. The SL and TL audiences share the same understanding of the economic expressions used in a stock exchange. In this case, humour is mainly generated by the verbal modes, which predominate over non-verbal modes in the subtitling process.

Example 2 Political and legal domain

Example background

Fen's friend Mr. Wu is sceptical about the reasons why Fen fell in love with Xiaoxiao.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

秦奋：这回我是准备正经娶她当媳妇的，不敢轻举妄动。她这样的，心不给你身体就不可能给你。话说回来了，一旦她把心给你，你的身体就判了无期徒刑了。我还是趁着宣判之前啊自由会儿吧！

吴先生：你喜欢她什么啊？

秦奋：心眼实诚啊。

吴先生：得了吧，你就看人家长得好看。

秦奋：我就图她长得好看又怎么了，我为我们老秦家改良后代有什么错啊？非找一难看的啊？天天想着怎么越狱你就舒服啦？

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen Qin: I am serious about marrying her and I can't <u>act rashly and blindly without careful thought</u>. Women like her, if she can't give you her heart, then you can't have her body. All in

all, once she gives you her heart, your body is <u>given a life sentence</u>. I should enjoy myself before that <u>pronouncement</u> happens.

Mr. Wu: What do you like about her?

Fen Qin: She is kind-hearted and honest.

Mr. Wu: Don't lie to me. You like her beauty.

Fen Qin: So what? Must I deprive my children of good looks and genes? Must I look for someone with an ugly appearance and try to <u>escape from the prison</u> all day?

English subtitles

Fen Qin: This time, I'm serious about marrying her. I can't be <u>reckless</u>. She'd never give me her body before she gave me her heart. But then, once she gives you her heart, your body is <u>sentenced for life</u>. So, I should <u>enjoy freedom</u> while I can.

Mr. Wu: What do you like about her?

Fen Qin: She has a good soul.

Mr. Wu: Oh, please. You like her because she's pretty.

Fen Qin: What's wrong with that? I should deprive my children of good genes? Must I marry someone ugly? Spend my life trying to <u>escape</u>?

Analysis

The use of political words and legal terms in this example adds a humorous flavour to the conversation between Fen and his friend Mr. Wu. The politically related word in this instance is "reckless" ('轻举妄动') (a Chinese set phrase). Its full meaning in Mandarin Chinese is 'to act rashly and blindly without careful thought', and it originates from the classic Chinese text *Tao Te Ching*.[46] This expression is adapted from ("祸兮福之所倚，福兮祸之所伏，孰知其极？") (*Set Phrase Dictionary*). It can be paraphrased as "Misery! – Happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness! – Misery lurks beneath it! Who knows what either will come to in the end" (Li 2015, p.126).[47] Nowadays, the Chinese set phrase for "reckless" is often associated with

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[46] *Tao Te Ching* (or *Dao De Jing* in Chinese 道德经) is a text written by the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu around 400BC, which inspires people to learn to be self-aware (Walter 2013).
[47] There are various interpretations of Lau Tzu's ideas. This phrase has also been translated as "Woe is the place where weal rests while weal is the place where woe lurks. In a word, weal and woe inter-depend upon each other and keep rippling ahead and forward" (Cai 2015, p.75).

war or used in political contexts to press home the argument that one should be calm in the face of the enemy. However, in this romantic context, it implies that Fen has a prudent attitude towards his relationship with his girlfriend. The comic effect relies heavily on the dissonant use of this political term in the domain of love and marriage. Its cultural heritage and political overtones are lost in the subtitles.

In the Chinese original, laughter also stems from the use of the legal terms 'life sentence' and 'pronouncement' to describe Fen's determination to marry. He has spent the whole film seeking love and marriage and now mockingly and disingenuously casts it as being 'given a life sentence', referring to being sent to prison for life after conviction for a serious crime. The metaphorical use of this legal term expresses Fen's understanding of love and marriage as a life-long contract that is legally binding. Fen mocks the very institution the audience knows he wants desperately, as if to hide the depth of his love for his girlfriend. The English subtitles are able to maintain the humour of the source, and dynamic equivalence is achieved between the SL and TL. The successful transfer of humour here relies on the cultural similarity between the domains of legal discourse in China and the anglophone world, and a shared understanding of the cultural incongruity of applying such legal discourse to love and sex.

Incongruous humour stems from Fen's motivation to marry a good-looking girl so he does not need to seek to "escape from [the] prison" that is marriage. Again, the term he uses does not match the topic he is discussing. The phrase functions as a metaphor, suggesting that an unhappy marriage is like a prison. It references the Chinese satirical novel *Fortress Besieged* (written by Zhongshu Qian). The novel famously deals with a man returning to China after some time overseas who views marriage as a prison. To the Chinese ear, Fen's Beijing dialect reinforces the humorous effect. However, humour in the acoustic channel is difficult to transfer to the TL. The subtitler's choice to omit "prison" in the English subtitles is due to its redundancy in this context. As observed by Díaz-Cintas and Remael, "omission or deletion are unavoidable in subtitling" (2014, p.162). In the English subtitled version, humour is lost for the sake of maintaining meaning in the TL. As a consequence of this omission, the subtitles fail to replicate the incongruous effect, which is the source of humour in the SL.

This example shows that domain-mismatch humour depends heavily on the context and a shared comprehension among SL and TL audiences of the mismatch between words and the situation in which they are used. In this example, the verbal mode is the sole mode of humour transfer to the TL.

3.4.3   Heterogeneous complex humour

This section aims to analyse heterogeneous complex humour, where a hybrid of two or more different types of humour can be identified in a single instance. This example involves a combination of verbal humour, in the form of code-switching humour, and non-verbal humour: situational humour and visual humour.

Example

Example background

Fen accompanies Xiaoxiao to Japan. They pass a church and she suggests that Fen goes in and confesses to the priest. Mr. Wu is Fen's friend who is in charge of translating Japanese into Chinese.

Chinese, Japanese and English lines

秦奋：你确定他肯定听不懂中国话吗？

吴先生：放心吧！听得懂人家也不会给你传出去。

牧师：どうぞ。

秦奋：诶我要捐你们一千万你接受吗？

牧师：Do you speak English?

秦奋：十个一百万，很多的。

牧师：No English.

秦奋：给钱都不要，看来你还真是听不懂。那我就放心了。那我就从幼儿园干过的坏事开始说起吧!

牧师：Excuse me, time! It's really…

秦奋：还早着呢！我插队完还有工作，工作完还得谈恋爱的事儿。早着呢!

牧师：Miss. Miss, excuse me!

Chinese subtitles

秦奋：你确定他肯定听不懂中国话吗？

吴先生：放心吧！听得懂人家也不会给你传出去。

牧师：请开始吧！

秦奋：我要捐你们一千万，你接受吗？

牧师：您可以讲英语吗？

秦奋：十个一百万，很多的。

牧师：不懂英文啊！

秦奋：给钱都不要，看来你还真是听不懂。那我就放心了。那我就从幼儿园干过的坏事开始说起吧！。。。。。。

牧师：对不起！已经很晚了。

秦奋：还早着呢！我插队完还有工作，工作完还得谈恋爱的事儿。早着呢！

牧师：小姐，小姐，对不起！

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Fen Qin: Are you sure that he can't understand Chinese?

Mr. Wu: Just relax! Even if he understands, he would not tell others.

Priest: Please begin!

Fen Qin: If I donate you 10 million, will you receive it?

Priest: Do you speak English?

Fen Qin: That's ten times one million. A large amount of money!

Priest: No English.

Fen Qin: You don't want the money, it seems that you don't understand Chinese. Then I can relax and I will start from nursery.

Priest: Sorry! Excuse me, time! It's really…

Fen Qin: It is just started. After secondary school, I have my countryside stories as a member of a rural production team, then my career and my love life! I'm just getting started.

Priest: Miss. Miss, excuse me.

English subtitles

Fen Qin: You sure he doesn't understand Chinese?

Mr. Wu: Don't worry! Even if he does, he's not going to broadcast it!

Priest: Please, begin!

Fen Qin: I want to donate 10 million. You want it?

Priest: Do you speak English?

Fen Qin: That's ten times a million. That's a lot!

Priest: No English.

Fen Qin: You don't even want money? Looks like you really don't understand! Now I can relax. I'll start from the bad things I did in kindergarten.

Priest: Excuse me. The time… It's very late.

Fen Qin: I'm just getting started! After middle school, I have my countryside stories, then my career and my love life! I'm just getting started.

Priest: Miss.

Screenshots

Figure 3.25 Author's screenshot depicting the priest's facial expression (1) (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.26 Author's screenshot depicting the priest's facial expression (2) (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.27 Author's screenshot depicting the priest's facial expression (3) (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.28 Author's screenshot depicting the clock (1) (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.29 Author's screenshot depicting the priest wiping his face with his handkerchief (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.30 Author's screenshot depicting the priest looking tired (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.31 Author's screenshot depicting the priest taking a rest in a chair (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.32 Author's screenshot depicting the priest falling asleep (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.33 Author's screenshot depicting the clock (2) (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.34 Author's screenshot depicting the priest wakening up (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.35 Author's screenshot shows that the priest begs Fen to end his confession (If you are the one 2008).

Figure 3.36 Author's screenshot depicting the priest turning to Fen's friend (If you are the one 2008).

Analysis

This example is an instance of heterogenous complex humour where the Chinese audience can enjoy the hilariously incongruous behaviour of the priest during Fen's confession. Firstly, the humour of the sequence is based on a combination of code-switching, the resulting misunderstanding, and the absurdity of the situation. Fen doubts his friend's assurance that the priest does not speak Mandarin. He therefore decides to test the priest's understanding of Chinese. He kneels down on the floor and prepares for confession. Humour is elicited by the use of several different languages: Japanese, Mandarin Chinese and English. At the beginning of the confession, the priest speaks the Japanese word for "please" ('どうぞ'). This is because Fen's appearance makes the priest believe that he is Japanese, given that the scene is set in Japan. However, Fen does not speak Japanese. Fen speaks in Mandarin to test the priest's linguistic knowledge because Fen is worried that the priest might "broadcast" his sins. Fen tests the priest by offering to donate 10 million to the church. Humour occurs due to the code-switching between Japanese and English. However, this is only perceivable to viewers with a knowledge of both Japanese and English. Viewers without any Japanese are unlikely to spot the phonetic difference between Japanese and Mandarin, in which case the code-switching goes unnoticed. The priest answers in English "Do you speak English?" with a confused facial expression (Figure 3.25), which suggests that the priest has no knowledge of Chinese. However, as the priest's answer fails to reassure and convince him fully, Fen retests him in Mandarin. The priest replies in English "No English" with another expression of

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confusion (Figure 3.26). Fen then starts to confess his worst misdemeanours, safe in the knowledge that they will go unpunished. Humour is produced by the interplay of the verbal mode and non-verbal mode, such as the kinesic action when the priest nods his head (Figure 3.27) even though he has not the faintest idea of what Fen is saying.

The humour also relies on non-verbal modes (kinesic actions, facial expressions and background music). When Fen starts to confess, the camera moves to the clock, which shows one o'clock in the afternoon (Figure 3.28). The church bell acts as a timer to mark Fen's four consecutive hours of confession. Initially, the priest looks patient. However, two hours later (three o'clock), Fen has not finished his confession. Humour in this scene is engendered by the priest's exaggerated kinesic actions, leading to incongruity via the visual channel, accompanied by cheerful music to reinforce the humour. The priest stands in front of Fen for these two hours and ends up looking extremely tired. He is dripping with sweat, causing him to take out his handkerchief to wipe his face (Figure 3.29). Subsequently, he starts to massage his waist to relax (Figure 3.30). Eventually, he supports himself with a chair and sits down to take a break (Figure 3.31). The priest then falls asleep, which generates an incongruous effect (Figure 3.32). This series of kinesic actions is the source of humour because it clashes with people's established concept of how a priest should act. His responsibility is to listen to or comfort people when they are in difficulty, not sleep through their confession.

The extreme length of Fen's confession creates a comic effect, as do the humorous stories it contains. Fen relates a situation from his time as a student of farm production, when he shared a room with eight friends. At his suggestion, the students rubbed balm on the soles of one of the eight friends and then waved a fan over him, which made him wet the bed. The practical joke amused Fen and his friends hugely. Their laughter is associated with superiority theory, which states that we feel superior to someone else in the face of his/her incompetence or misfortune.

When the clock shows five o'clock (Figure 3.33), Fen is still confessing his sins. Humour is created by the very different facial expressions of the priest and Fen Qin. The loud chiming of the church clock wakes the priest (Figure 3.34), who then suggests that Fen should end his confession by saying "Excuse me, the time… It's very late" (Figure 3.35). By contrast, Fen is still

revelling in his confession and has no intention of ending it. The priest has no choice but to continue to listen, and the camera moves outside. It is starting to grow dark, which further underlines the extreme length of Fen's confession. After a while, the priest turns to Fen's friends for rescue. His painful expression contributes one more humorous moment to the scene (Figure 3.36).

3.5   Conclusion

If You Are the One (2008) is a romantic comedy. Yet its humour in some senses exceeds the remit of that genre. Core to the film's humour is an intent to satirise certain issues and problems in Chinese society. This highlights both the problem for the subtitler and the importance of this film as a case study for subtitling studies. The film's humorous cultural satire is not readily accessible to the TL audience and is frequently lost in the English subtitled version. This supports one of the core arguments of this thesis: subtitling needs to be treated as something more than the mere transfer of language. In order to subtitle *If You Are the One* successfully, it is also necessary to translate culture into the subtitles. This thesis argues that is an essential part of the subtitling process to consider the complexity of different factors involved in the transfer of humour. According to Lefevre, "Translation is not made in a vacuum" (2002, p.14). Neither is subtitling. The translation of Chinese cultural humour in *If You Are the One* shows that references embedded in Chinese culture pose a particular challenge to subtitlers. Where humour is maintained in the English subtitles by substitution, this is often at the cost of losing the original flavour. However, if there is an equivalent expression in the TL, humour is fully transferred. The situation and non-verbal modes can work together to compensate for the loss of cultural humour. This chapter has presented analysis of examples that fall under the seven subcategories of VEH. This analysis found that omission, dynamic equivalence and explicitation are adopted by the subtitler as strategies to achieve humour transfer. Sexual humour and domain-mismatch humour are transferable through the English subtitles when there is shared knowledge between the SL and TL audiences. Other types of VEH, such as code-switching humour and dialect humour, are partially lost in the translation process. The translation of phonological humour is severely hampered by its exclusive dependence on the verbal mode. As a consequence, this type of humour is generally lost in the TL. While specific types of humour are lost in the subtitled version of *If You Are the One*,

the film remains funny overall. This is achieved because the subtitles work flexibly between humour types, compensating and substituting where possible to make up for translation loss. Humour is innately multimodal, and this analysis of *If You Are the One* has underlined that so too is the subtitling process in its quest to generate laughter.

Chapter 4 The translation of humour in the Chinese chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the multimodal linguistic and semiotic transfer of humour in the Chinese chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013). It underlines that subtitles are directly geared to the perceived needs of their audience, and those needs contribute to shaping the subtitling process. *Finding Mr. Right*, a chick flick, has a specific niche audience: largely urban female viewers. This film, though, is a particularly important case study not only because of its clear targeting of its audience, but also the film's complex bilingualism and the challenges this poses to the subtitler. The chapter starts by exploring the film's reach in both China and anglophone countries. It then examines how the film draws on Nora Ephron's 1993 movie *Sleepless in Seattle* in a complex act of intertextual borrowing. Finally, it details the ways in which this film both works within and subverts different elements of the chick flick genre. It focuses in particular on the film's social and political critique of China, an aspect of the movie which is testing to subtitle. As Louisa Desilla (2012, p.35) suggests, films are multimodal products, involving the interaction of different semiotic modes. This chapter concurs with Desilla, focusing on the different multimodal ways in which the humour of this film works in the Chinese and anglophone contexts.

4.2 Why *Finding Mr. Right*?

Firstly, in terms of its box-office receipts, *Finding Mr. Right* represents a highly successful example of the Chinese chick flick genre. This illustrates the thirst for commercial films of this type in China and the purchasing power of Chinese urban female audiences (Pan 2015, p.60).[48] According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Finding Mr. Right* was the biggest box-office hit of the first half of 2013 in China, becoming one of the country's ten highest-grossing domestic films

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[48] According to Pan (2015, p.62), the chick flick genre has benefited from the rise in women's political, social and educational status over the decades. The commercial success of a number of Chinese chick flicks such as *Love is Not Blind*, *One Night Surprise* and *Finding Mr. Right* shows the power of the genre in the Chinese market (Pan 2015, p.59).

up to that point (Tsui, 2013). It took more than RMB500 million ($85 million) at the box office (Child 2014). The film's mass popular appeal to the domestic audience in China has had positive knock-on effects across the tourism and property sectors.[49]

Secondly, the film's bilingualism and its corresponding position between cultures and languages make its humour challenging to subtitle. The film's subtitles are both a heuristic artefact and part of the creation of humour, enhancing the intelligibility of humour and the way in which it works in the bilingual Chinese and English context. Due to its bilingual dialogue, most viewers rely on the subtitles at some point when watching this film. The subtitles are an integral part of the movie, and they actively provoke humour. Importantly, they were part of the film before it was even subtitled for foreign markets. In this case, the principal difficulty that the subtitler needs to resolve is how the subtitling can transcend national, cultural and linguistic boundaries to enhance the understanding of transcultural humour for both domestic and English-speaking audiences. The subtitling process embodies these transcultural flows, in which "cultural forms move, change and are reused to fashion new identities in diverse contexts" (Pennycook 2006, p.6).

Thirdly, the subtitles use a plethora of translation strategies to trigger laughter by communicating aspects of humour such as wordplay, cultural references, and intertextuality. This makes the film an intriguing case study because it is reflects the way Chinese cinema promotes Chinese humour to the global audiences.

The final reason for choosing this film is that it was passed by the Chinese censorship system even though it touches on social issues such as infidelity, homosexuality, children born out of wedlock overseas and corruption. In China, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) directly censored the audiovisual products of the film industry (Wang 2014, p.304). Its predecessor, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), gave guidelines for censorship on its official website (Wang 2014, p.404).[50]

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[49] It led to Chinese tourists flocking to Seattle (Lupkin 2014) and even triggered a house-buying boom in Seattle (Frank 2014), with over a third of homes there being bought by Chinese people (Child 2014).
[50] SAPPRFT was established by the merger of two government regulators: SARFT and the General Administration of Press and Publication (Brzeski 2018). SAPPRFT has been abolished, but censorship has not (Brzeski 2018). A new regulatory body is in charge of censoring and monitoring all media at the State Council or cabinet level

SAPPRFT banned any content that, in its view, "disturbs social order and threatens social stability" (Wang and Zhang 2017, p.304) and which "compromises social morality or traditional cultures in China" (Wang and Zhang 2017, p.304). Yang (2018b, pp.165-166) argues that the Chinese authorities were able to be more tolerant of this film due to its setting in an American city (Seattle) and 'Hollywood' genre, which mask the film's critique of Chinese culture and society.

4.3   The context of *Finding Mr. Right* in Mainland China and anglophone countries

Released on 21st March 2013 in Mainland China,[51] *Finding Mr. Right* is also known as *Beijing Meets Seattle*.[52] It is a chick flick directed by the female Chinese director Xiaolu Xue. With its main setting in Seattle, it is a transnational film. The plot centres on the Beijing woman Jiajia Wen, the pregnant mistress of a married tycoon. She flies to Seattle to deliver her baby in order to obtain American citizenship for the child and also to win over her married lover. During Jiajia's stay in Seattle, her lover's involvement in corruption means her money is cut off. She meets a kind but reticent Chinese immigrant, Frank, who is working as a driver. Helped by Frank, Jiajia gradually changes from being a superficial, selfish and insolent gold digger to become mature and independent. She leaves her lover and begins a successful career as a businesswoman. The story closes with the main characters (Jiajia and Frank) united in a happy ending as Jiajia at last finds her Mr. Right.

On the Douban website, more than 447,398 user ratings give this film a total of 7.3 out of 10 (Douban Film 2013). China's largest online film database, Mtime, shows the film struck a chord with Chinese audiences as over 18,315 users have rated it 7.7 out of 10 (Mtime 2013). Jing Yang (2018b, p.157) offers three reasons for the film's success. Firstly, the script is well written by an experienced and well-known director.[53] Secondly, the film has slick cinematography, star

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(Brzeski 2018).

[51] *Finding Mr. Right* premiered on Valentine's Day 2013 in Hong Kong (Yang 2018a, p.157).

[52] The film has different titles in Mainland China and abroad. The Chinese title is *Beijing meets Seattle*, which prompts the Chinese audience to associate it with the romantic comedy *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993). The release of *Finding Mr. Right* (2013) coincided with the 20th anniversary of *Sleepless in Seattle*. As Kerr (2013) observes, the Chinese title implies the film is a continuation of its predecessor.

[53] Xiaolu Xue not only teaches at the Beijing Film Academy (Yang 2018b, p.157), but is also a veteran screenwriter of both films and TV drama (Yang 2018b, p.157).

actors and an international production team. Thirdly, the film borrows Hollywood tropes and methods. What Yang does not explore is how the film has attracted a mass female audience, which reflects the enormous potential of the chick flick genre in China. Jiajia's transformation from a materialistic prima donna to a financially independent woman who finds her Mr. Right resonates with female audiences pursuing their own aspirations for career progression and true love. This film cleverly uses humour and genre tropes to touch on difficult social issues such as birth tourism (overseas birth), lesbianism and extramarital relationships. Such issues are hot topics in Chinese society and have sparked heated reactions on the country's social media.

The English subtitled version of *Finding Mr. Right* was released on 15th November 2013 in the US. It took only $6945 at the box office in that market (IMDb 2013). Although the film targeted both home and Hollywood markets (Yang 2018b, pp.153-154), its performance in English-speaking countries was less than stellar, perhaps as a result of its limited availability in only a small number of cinemas in the US (Yang 2018b, p.157). English-speaking audiences would later have better access to *Finding Mr. Right* through imported DVDs. The English subtitled version of the film is also available on sites such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. For example, almost 2000 IMDb users worldwide have rated the film (IMDb 2013). Their reviews are mixed. This can perhaps be explained by the 'cultural discount' Chinese audiovisual products face when they are exported to an international market where their cultural values are regarded as alien (Zhang 2018, p.iii).[54] Humour transfer is shaped by national aesthetic tastes, social and cultural values, language, and cultural background (Lee 2006, p.260). To challenge this cultural discount, *Finding Mr. Right* aligns itself with the Hollywood film *Sleepless in Seattle.*

4.4   *Finding Mr. Right* (2013) and *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993)

During his state visit to the US in 2015, Chinese President Xi noted the popularity of *Sleepless in Seattle* in China (BBC News 2015a), although it was never released in Mainland cinemas

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[54] The concept of a 'cultural discount' was proposed by Hoskins and Mirus in 1988. It is applied to cultural products from a country or region that fail to be understood abroad because of cultural differences, resulting in them being perceived as of lesser value (Zhang 2018, p.iii).

(Yang 2018b, p.158). This 1993 Oscar-nominated romantic comedy gained national recognition in China through imported DVDs and online platforms such as iQiyi and Tencent, which offer both the original film and its Chinese-dubbed version (Yang 2018a, p.158). *Finding Mr. Right* borrows from *Sleepless in Seattle*'s fame, romantic narrative, visuals and music. Like *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Finding Mr. Right* is a star vehicle. It features Wei Tang and Xiubo Wu who are well-known actors in China. *Finding Mr. Right* reconstructs the romantic storyline of *Sleepless in Seattle* and pushes the audience to recognise the way it riffs off its Hollywood precursor. The female protagonists in both films come to Seattle and find their true love.[55] The heroes are both single and raising their children alone.[56] *Finding Mr. Right* is peppered with visual references to *Sleepless in Seattle* in its locations: Seattle and the Empire State Building. Jiajia cites *Sleepless in Seattle* as her favourite film and takes Frank's daughter to watch it. The soundtrack to *Finding Mr. Right* features many Western pop songs, and a song featured in *Sleepless in Seattle, When I Fall in Love*, is used for Frank and Jiajia's pivotal meeting at the Empire State Building. Both films follow the chick flick mantra that "True love is supreme" (Wang 2016, p.239).

4.5   Chick flicks

This section explores chick flicks as a film genre and evaluates the complex ways in which *Finding Mr. Right* both works within and subverts the genre. 'Chick flick' is a media term which dates from the mid-1990s and refers to a broad trend in Anglo-American cinema (Ferriss and Young 2007, p.2, Kuhn and Westwell 2012). Ferriss and Young (2007, p.2) detail the explosion in popularity of the genre in the 1990s. The name itself is an amalgam of two terms: 'chick' (slang for girl or woman) and 'flick' (an informal word for a film). Chick flicks are thus explicitly marketed as 'female films' (Shen 2016, p.53). Though chick flicks are often read as inherently patriarchal because of their frequent plotlines about needy women seeking male protection (Ferriss and Young 2007, pp.2-3), post-feminist interpretations of the genre also exist and provide more emancipatory readings of these films (Li 2007, p.567).[57] Chick flicks often

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[55] Another echo is that *Sleepless in Seattle*'s heroine, Annie, loves *An Affair to Remember* (1957), while the female protagonist *of Finding Mr. Right*, Jiajia, is a big fan of *Sleepless in Seattle*.

[56] In *Sleepless in Seattle*, Sam is a widowed architect who loves his dead wife and is raising their eight-year old son himself. While the hero of *Finding Mr. Right*, Frank, is a driver working for a maternity centre in Seattle and divorced from a successful and ambitious businesswoman, he is also caring for his child alone.

[57] 'Post-feminism' has become a key term of feminist cultural critique in recent years (Gill and Scharff 2011, p.3).

showcase "Female bonding, … strong women and suffering women, sacrifice, sickness and love and loss" (Cook 2006, p.vi) as well as romantic conquest (Kuhn and Westwell 2012). Chick flicks characteristically focus on female characters and raise questions about women's social and sexual roles, female friendship, resilience and independence (Ferriss and Young 2007, p.4).

Finding Mr. Right both endorses and subverts the structure of chick flicks. Its narrative follows the Hollywood pattern of initial meeting, emotional fermentation, impediment, tough times and ultimately a happy ending (Wang 2016, p.238). The heroine Jiajia and hero Frank experience difficulties and believe their love to be unrequited before achieving both career success and love following hardship.[58] Chick flicks often enable their heroines to reach self-actualisation and fulfilment (Xian 2012, p.47, Pan 2015, p.61). The chick flick genre came to prominence in the 1990s when neoliberalism was the prevailing economic approach in the US (Xian 2012, p.47). As a result, chick flicks reflect the characteristics of neoliberal ideology: individualism, choice and freedom (Xian 2012, p.47).[59] This journey to self-actualisation and fulfilment is key to *Finding Mr. Right*. Jiajia returns to China, marries her tycoon boyfriend and lives an extravagant life. She is, though, deeply unhappy, discovering money does not bring happiness. She leaves her rich husband and transforms herself from an appendage to a male into a financially and professionally independent woman. Her transformation speaks to the film's target audience: urban female professionals (Xian 2012, p.47).

Chinese chick flicks are low budget productions yet dominate the Chinese market (Wang and Wang 2018, p.95). 'Chick flick' is a less familiar term in China than in Hollywood, and Chinese academic studies on the topic began only in 2009 when the country's first chick flick, *Sophie's Revenge*, was released (Li 2012 p.53, Shen 2016, p.53, Xian 2012, p.46, Wang and Wang 2018, p.95). The genre was clearly imported from Hollywood because no similar category existed in

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As well as 'chick' post-feminism, other identified forms include 'grrrl' post-feminism and 'academic' post-feminism (Ferriss and Young 2007, p.21). For a detailed discussion of post-feminism see Chris Holmlund. In general, post-feminism argues that choice is individual (whether it is about family, career, cosmetic surgery or nail colour) and the pleasures of consumerism are to be embraced (Ferriss and Young 2007, p.4).

[58] The turning point happens when Jiajia's tycoon lover is put in prison for corruption so she starts working for the maternity centre to make a living. With Frank's help, she realises that money cannot bring real happiness.

[59] Neoliberalism favours market supremacy and competitive freedom rather than Keynesian state planning. This approach was established in the post-war years by the Chicago School of Political Economy (Chen 2013, p.441). Neoliberalism claims the individual is responsible for his/her own social status, and emphasises individualism and choice via self-fashioning or entrepreneurial endeavour (Negra and Tasker 2013, p.348).

Chinese cinema prior to the introduction of the 'chick flick' label, despite the genre's close connection to romantic comedy and women's film (Li 2012, p.53). Xian (2012, p.46) does propose that the chick flick genre stems from romantic comedy and that it is a subgenre which falls between romance and comedy. However, Chinese romantic comedies often give priority to a dominant patriarchal ideology and focus on a male protagonist, whereas chick flicks in China do something different (Li 2012, p.53). Chinese chick flicks are closely associated with big cities and urbanisation (Pan 2015, p.59, Shen 2016, p.53).[60] Chinese chick flicks are often set in a metropolis such as Beijing or Shanghai (Xian 2012, p.49), filled with high-end department stores, luxury brands and fashion goods (Li 2007, pp.565-566). They showcase female independence and personal power.

According to Radner (2010, p.29), the chick flick differs from other genres of films for female audiences in its focus on consumer culture and "designer clothes, expensive and impractical footwear, and trendy accessories" (Ferriss and Young 2007, p.4). *Finding Mr. Right* creates a post-feminist heroine who embraces the joys of consumer culture (Yang 2018b, p.159). China's consumption of luxury goods accounts for nearly a third of the global luxury market (Master and Kwok 2018). As the mistress of a married tycoon, Jiajia has "a certain amount of economic power" (Yang 2018b, p.160). Jiajia books a presidential suite at a luxury hotel to watch New Year fireworks, wears fine jewellery and carries designer bags from brands such as Balenciaga, Christian Dior and Hermès, all of which shows her "access to power and freedom as a result of consumption" (Yang 2018b, p.160).

This film is also emancipatory in its commitment to addressing social issues in a radically changing contemporary Chinese society. The film's transnational setting acts as a buffer that allows discussion of the issues of a legitimate *hukou* registration for children born out of

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[60] Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies in 1978, China has been undergoing a rapid process of urbanisation, with 58.52% of the population living in urban areas by 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2018).

wedlock, [61] the implementation of China's 'one-child policy' [62] and homosexuality. [63] The fictional character of Jiajia in the film alludes to the Meimei Guo affair,[64] which caused a nationwide scandal and exposed the Chinese elite's ability to use their wealth to circumvent moral regulations about issues such as *baoernai* (literally having a 'second wife') (Yang 2018b, p.165).[65] *Baoernai* is a controversial topic associated with corruption and the embezzlement of public funds by officials to support these women (Jeffrys 2004, p.90). *Baoernai* originated

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[61] *Hukou* is a system of household registration in Mainland China. The implementation of the *hukou* system began in the 1950s and took full effect in the 1960s to control the mobility of people between cities and rural areas (Cheng and Selden 1994 cited in Huang 2012, p.22). In China, every citizen must register under the *hukou* system (Kuang and Liu 2012, p.1). Although China has experienced significant liberalisation of sexual attitudes in recent decades and premarital sex is a common phenomenon, unmarried motherhood is still considered to be a taboo topic (Branigan 2014). Unmarried mothers are required to pay a fine when they give birth as this breaks family-planning laws. They often encounter prejudice when hunting for jobs, and are generally subject to negative social attitudes (Branigan 2014). *Hukou* guarantees children access to certain basic services such as healthcare, education and social insurance (Branigan 2014). However, it is impossible to obtain a legitimate *hukou* registration for a child born out of wedlock because the birth certificate is the official document required to register (Branigan 2014). In 2014, Hubei became the first province to issue birth certificates that protect the *hukou* rights of unmarried mothers and their children (Branigan 2014). In *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), the health authorities do not issue Jiajia with a birth certificate for her child because she is an unmarried woman. In 2016, China's cabinet, the State Council, instituted a policy that children born out of wedlock could obtain a legitimate *hukou* registration under the name of their father or mother (Cai 2019). However, in reality, enforcement of this policy is weak, and unmarried mothers are still fined for giving birth in 20 provinces (Cai 2019). In 2019, at a meeting of the National People's Congress, one member suggested strengthening existing laws to reduce discrimination against children of unmarried parents, arguing that they are entitled to be treated as being equal to other children (Cai 2019).

[62] The one-child policy was implemented in 1979 to prevent a baby boom (BBC News 2015b). The Chinese authorities approved the end of the one-child policy in late 2015 and allowed most married couples (if at least one of them is an only child) to have two children due to an ageing population and a shortage of labour (BBC News 2015a, Fincher 2018). Violating the one-child policy could result in various punishments such as fines and loss of employment (BBC News 2015a). Children born in violation of the one-child policy are 'black children', which means they cannot obtain a birth certificate and *hukou* registration. Consequently, they have no right to go to school or access healthcare and are ostracised in society (Johnson 2016, p.6).

[63] Homosexuality is a subculture in China (Yang 2018b, p.166). Until 1997, homosexuality was associated with offensive behaviour, and even called hooliganism (Van de Werff 2010, p.176). Prior to 2001, homosexuality was also associated with mental illness (Van de Werff 2010, p.176). As Van de Werff (2010, p.176) observes, homosexual materials such as magazines, books and films are often prohibited or strictly censored. The social acceptance of gay people varies between cities and rural areas, with people in the big and economically developed cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou being more tolerant than those in the countryside (Van de Werff 2010, p.176). Generally speaking, homosexual people are still discriminated against and heavily stigmatised (Van de Werff 2010, p.177).

[64] In June 2011, Meimei Guo, a twenty-year-old Chinese woman, posted pictures of her Maserati car, Hermès bags and luxurious villa on her personal microblog (Long 2016, p.372). She claimed to be the general manager of the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC), China's largest state-owned charity organisation. Her flaunting of her wealth not only ignited nationwide suspicion but also revealed RCSC staff's embezzlement of donations and money collected from Chinese citizens for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Long 2016, p.372, Yang 2018b, p.163).

[65] *Baoernai* is a legally unsanctioned heterosexual relationship which has become common in areas of China where the economy is booming (Xiao 2011, p.608). Baoernai is technically illegal but rarely punished. Being a 'second wife' means a women is in a long-term relationship with a married man (often a government official, bureaucrat or entrepreneur) (Jeffreys 2004, p.89, Xiao 2011, p.608).

in the early 1990s in Guangdong Province (Xiao 2011, p.608). It is acceptable for men to have a 'second wife', but not for women to have a 'second husband', which shows that women are still oppressed by the dominant patriarchal ideology. This stems from Chinese women's traditional role, which is one of unquestioning obedience and subservience to their husbands (Leung 2003b, p.361). *Finding Mr. Right* presents a post-feminist gender discourse that questions the validity of this role. Jiajia emancipates herself from her financial dependence on her lover by becoming a businesswoman in her own right. However, despite her professional success, her career replicates a rather traditional role for women: cooking food for her own child and other children. This complies with the Confucian proposition that "Men are primarily outside the home, and women are primarily inside the home" (Leung 2003, p.360). To some extent, this demonstrates that Chinese women's attempts to liberate themselves from the patriarchal system have not yet been fully realised, and there has been no radical transformation of women's second-class social status.[66] *Finding Mr. Right* speaks to women's place in Chinese society, but it does so by means of comedy.

4.6   Types of humour in *Finding Mr. Right*

Finding Mr. Right is a multimodal composition. While chick flicks may be characterised by humour targeting female audiences, they also accommodate other types of multi-layered humour. Using the concept of multimodality, this chapter analyses examples of three types of audiovisual humour: Chinese cultural humour, VEH humour and heterogeneous complex

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[66] China has made efforts to improve women's social status and promote the idea that women have equal rights. The May Fourth Movement born in 1919 has proved key to women's liberation in China (Li 2010, p.20). The movement aimed to resolve the problems of reconstructing culture, implementing democracy and developing science. It established the foundations of modern Chinese culture (Li 2010, p.20). In the early 1920s, women's movements in urban areas were inspired by the May Fourth ideals and progressively accepted by the Chinese Communist Party (Johnson 2009, p.31). The PRC was established in 1949 and "gender equality was written into the Constitution" (Du and Zheng 2005, p.126). The All-China Democratic Women's Federation was established in 1949 (Snow 2004, p.69). It is a nationwide official organisation which aims to safeguarding women's rights and interests. In the 1980s, China turned to a socialist market economy in the wake of the reform and opening-up policies. As a result, the country witnessed dramatic changes to all aspects of life (Leung 2003, p.366). These changes have been accompanied by discrimination and prejudice towards women when it comes to "hiring, rewards, promotion and pressure to withdraw them from the labour force" (Leung 2003, p.367). Women have effectively been pushed back into the kitchen to resume their role of mother (Leung 2003, p.368). To date, discrimination against women remains a significant issue, with women still less frequently promoted to key positions by employers, still victims of sexual harassment, and still having shorter careers because they are required to retire 5-10 years earlier than men (Zia 2018, Jin and Cao 2007, p.172, Leung 2003, p.367). Overall, Chinese woman still face clear societal challenges (Li 2007, p.566).

humour. In this way, the chapter explores the complexity of subtitling humour in *Finding Mr. Right*. It pays particular attention to how the subtitler deals with this film's transcultural context and its effect on the transfer of humour to the target audience.

4.6.1   Chinese cultural humour

Cultural references sit at the heart of the humour in *Finding Mr. Right* and are integral to its critique of Chinese culture. This section explores an example of how the film's Chinese cultural humour is subtitled for an English-speaking audience.

Example 1

Example background

Jiajia takes Frank's daughter, Julie, to New York where they argue about whether to visit the Empire State Building or the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

茱莉：你不讲信用，我们昨天说好了的。

佳佳：<u>唯女子与小人难养也</u>。谁说女人要讲信用的，我是女人我不需要讲信用。

茱莉：我是小人。

佳佳：你不是小人，你是小孩。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Julie: You broke your promise! We had a deal yesterday!

Jiajia: Only women and small men are hard to raise. I'm a woman. I can eat my words.

Julie: I'm a small man.

Jiajia: No, you're a child.

English subtitles

Julie: You lied! We had a deal yesterday!

Jiajia: According to Confucius, only women and petty men are difficult. I'm a woman. I can go back on my word.

Julie: I'm a petty man.

Jiajia: No, you're a child.

Analysis

Confucius's remark that "only women and petty men are difficult" ('唯女子与小人难养也') is a clear Chinese cultural reference in this humorous instance where Julie claims to be something she is not. "Petty man" is a key expression in generating humour. In Chinese, '小人' can refer to a villain or a child depending on the specific context. Julie's failure to distinguish the appropriate meaning in this case of polysemy triggers humour. The larger Chinese cultural reference also has different interpretations. Its literal meaning is "only women and small men are hard to raise". It also can be interpreted as 'women and villains are the only people that are hard to deal with'. The juxtaposition of women and villains is derogatory to women and underlines Confucius's disrespectful and prejudiced view of women (Child 2014). Croll (2013, p.86) argues that this contemptuous view of women resulted in over 2000 years of injustice for Chinese women. As "the dominant philosophic tradition of China" (Van de Werff 2010, p.173), Confucianism is a cornerstone of Chinese society, exerting a profound influence over culture, social lives and moral values. China has, Leung argues, "an essentially masculine value system" (2003, p.359). In a film which focuses on female audiences and speaks to their ambitions, the use of this historical reference taps into debates about gender equality. Chick flicks, Ferriss and Young (2007, p.1) argue, help women resolve difficulties and enable them to negotiate challenges.

In the English subtitles, the subtitler translates the line as "According to Confucius, only women and petty man are difficult". This uses the translation strategies of explicitation ("According to Confucius") and foreignisation. Venuti (1994, p.305) argues that this kind of foreignising attempts to liberate the reader from cultural constraints that often impair their ability to comprehend. The introduction of the exotic "Confucius" in the English subtitles gives the TL audience an opportunity to recognise an element of traditional Chinese culture. To many Westerners, the name of Confucius signals 'traditional Chinese culture', which allows

viewers not familiar with the intricacies of this specific play on concepts to harness Jiajia's remark to a source of cultural authority. The subtitler's choice of explicitation in adding "according to Confucius" gives Jiajia's decision to break her promise and act differently the support of a higher authority. Jiajia harnesses this patriarchal voice in an empowering way to justify doing exactly what she wants. Rather than being oppressed by Confucius, she uses him to further her own ends. Humour in the English subtitles is maintained, but it differs from that in the SL. In the original Chinese, humour relies on the audience's familiarity with the connotations of this culturally specific expression and the related polysemic wordplay. In the TL, humour results from the ambiguity evoked by the polysemic *small man* (小人) and Jiajia's volte-face.

Example 2

Example background

Jiajia stays at the maternity centre with other Chinese women. She behaves like a prima donna.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

佳佳：每天我都要吃那个什么。。。阿拉斯加大螃蟹好吧？我钱另付。

。。。。。。

佳佳：拜托，中国人要讲中文。

周逸：中文的意思是美国的孕妇不吃螃蟹，怕生出来的孩子<u>胡搅蛮缠</u>，<u>横行霸道</u>。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: Mrs. Huang, I love seafood. Can I have the… um Alaskan crab every day? I'll pay for that.

…

Jiajia: Please. Chinese must speak Chinese.

Yizhou: The Chinese means that Americans don't eat crabs when they're pregnant, because they are worried that their babies would <u>harass others with unreasonable demands and act in a tyrannical manner.</u>

English subtitles

Jiajia: Mrs. Huang, I love seafood. Can I have the…um Alaskan crab every day. I'll pay for that.

…

Jiajia: Please. Speak your own language.

Yizhou: We're saying Americans don't eat crabs when they're pregnant. So that the babies won't come out waving 8 legs.

Analysis

Jiajia's crass and demanding behaviour triggers humour. "Harass others with unreasonable demands" ('胡搅蛮缠') and "act in a tyrannical manner" ('横行霸道') are two key phrases in this example where metonymy is used to describe Jiajia's vulgar manner and arrogant attitudes when she asks Mrs. Huang to buy some Alaskan crabs for her.[67] There are many two-part allegorical sayings in Chinese culture. Often, only the first part is spoken, which is the literal meaning of the expression ('crab') that contains the allegory. The second part, which sometimes remains unspoken, is an explanation that reveals the implied meaning of the first part of the expression ("act in a tyrannical manner"). In Chinese, 'crab' relates to the two-part allegorical saying 'a crab crossing a river – seven hands and legs' (螃蟹过河－七手八脚) (Zhao 2012, p.96). In addition, some allegorical sayings draw on homophones and homonyms. In this example, Jiajia is defined as a tyrannical person, where 'tyrannical' (霸 bà) is a homonym of 'eight' (八 bā), and the only difference lies in the tone: the former uses the first tone, whereas the second uses the fourth tone. The humour here stems from unacceptable behaviour in relation to social norms (Attardo 1994, p.323). The two-part allegorical saying satirises the nouveau riche who believe that paying for service makes them superior. [68]

As Chiaro (1992, p.10) observes, when humour is too culturally specific, it does not trigger a comic effect in the TL. Rather than translating the set phrase from the SL literally, the subtitler renders it as "The babies won't come out waving 8 legs". Maintaining formal equivalence would lose the humorous effect, despite the semantic content of "act in a tyrannical manner"

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[67] Mrs. Huang is the head of the maternity centre. In traditional Chinese culture, post-partum confinement is known as *zuo yuezi*, which literally means 'sitting the month'. After giving birth, women are required to stay indoors for thirty days to recover from labour and devote themselves to feeding their baby (Peir 2011).

[68] The objects of the satire are "characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous or obnoxious by what they think, say, and do and are sometimes made even more ridiculous by the author's comments and narrative style" (Abrams and Harpham 2008, p.321).

still being effective in the TL. According to Schröter (2005, p.108), dynamic equivalence is used when formal equivalence fails to achieve the desired effect. The subtitler uses the strategy of "adaption to the local setting, to maintain humorous effect" (Gottlieb 1997, p.210). Dynamic equivalence retains the image of the crab, enabling humour to be meaningfully transferred by the English subtitles. The description of an infant "waving 8 legs" is a humorous exaggeration.

In summary, the subtitler's choice of strategy plays an important role in achieving dynamic equivalence in the transfer of cultural references from the SL to the TL. The humour from the SL is maintained, but the cultural connotations attached to this humour in the SL are hard to transfer. Examples 1 and 2 show that the transfer of humour relies heavily on the verbal mode. In both examples, this is the sole mode by which humour is transferred.

4.6.2   Verbally expressed humour

VEH is often specific to a language so this form of humour can be particularly difficult to subtitle. However, non-verbal modes also contribute to the humour generation in *Finding Mr. Right*. The examples that follow examine two subcategories of VEH: wordplay and dialect humour.

4.6.2.1   Wordplay

Wordplay refers to humour that is generated purely by linguistic elements.

Example 1

Example background
Jiajia arrives at the maternity centre and is shown her room by Mrs. Huang, the head of the centre.

Chinese lines (subtitles)
黄太：文小姐，来。这是你的房间。
佳佳：这么小，开什么玩笑啊。

黄太：我没有开玩笑啊。这间是<u>雅</u>房，卫生间在楼下。

佳佳：什么是雅房？

黄太：雅房就是不带卫生间。带卫生间的叫套房了。

佳佳：没有卫生间能叫雅？我要住套房。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Mrs. Huang: Mrs. Wen, come here. This is your room.

Jiajia: It's so small. Are you kidding?

Mrs. Huang: I'm not kidding. This is an elegant room, and the bathroom is downstairs.

Jiajia: What is an elegant room?

Mrs. Huang: Elegant room means without a bathroom. A room with bathroom is called en suite.

Jiajia: How is it elegant if there's no bathroom? I want to live in an en suite!

English subtitles

Mrs. Huang: Mrs. Wen, this is your room.

Jiajia: It's so small.

Mrs. Huang: I'm not kidding. This is a standard room, and the bathroom is downstairs.

Jiajia: What is a standard room?

Mrs. Huang: Standard means without a bathroom. A room with bathroom is called a suite.

Jiajia: How is it standard if there's no bathroom? I want a suite!

Analysis

Humour is provoked by Mrs. Huang's introduction of the type of room Jiajia will be staying in at the maternity centre. Euphemism is used to emphasise the small size of the room. Humour occurs when Mrs. Huang describes a small room without a bathroom as "an elegant room". Her concept of 'elegance' clashes with the expectations of Jiajia and the audience. A comic sound effect accompanies Mrs. Huang showing Jiajia the room, which augments the humorous effect. There is only a single bed, a small bedside table and a small desk. Jiajia's disappointment is clear. However, Mrs. Huang misinterprets Jiajia's remark "Are you kidding?"

as an accusation that she (Mrs. Huang) is playing a trick. Mrs. Huang's serious and angry facial expressions reinforce her retort of "I'm not kidding", which triggers the humorous response.

The English subtitles translate "elegant room" as "standard room" ('标准间') using the technique of neutralisation. It is accepted that a room described as 'standard' in English will not be luxurious so there is no humorous disjunction between language and reality. Therefore, the humour transferred through the subtitles is not particularly strong in comparison with the SL humour because of this neutralisation.

Example 2

Example background

Mrs. Huang is dancing with her son-in-law at a Christmas celebration. At the same time, she is talking to her daughter.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

黄太：不是你妈妈有种族歧视啦。那黑人有奥巴马或者乔丹，那你不给我找一个回来，却找一个卖车的，还要帮人家带小孩啊，你看看你呀，你这一年都<u>瘦得像个妖怪</u>一样。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Mrs. Huang: It's not like your mum is a racist. Obama and Jordan are both black. Why don't you find someone like that? What you find is just a car dealer and you have to look after his kids. Look at you, you are <u>as skinny as a monster (skeleton)</u> over the last year.

English subtitles

Mrs. Huang: It's not like I'm a racist. Obama and Jordan are both black. I wouldn't mind if you get a guy like that, but just a car dealer and taking care of his kids. Look at <u>how skinny you've become.</u>

Screenshots

Figure 4.1 Author's screenshot depicting Mrs. Huang and her son-in-law (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.2 Author's screenshot depicting Mrs. Huang and her daughter and her son-in-law (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

"As skinny as a monster" ('瘦得像妖怪一样') is the humour trigger in this example where exaggeration is used to underline the fact that Mrs. Huang is less than pleased with her daughter's choice to marry a car dealer. [69] Humour is generated in particular by using "monster" to describe her attractive daughter's appearance. The simile works perfectly for the Chinese audience thanks to the complexity of different factors (situation and non-verbal modes) which work together to elicit the comic effect. "Monster" is associated with giant, ugly and frightening beings, and applying the word to a young, beautiful woman is funny in its dissonance. The insult in "as skinny as a monster" conflicts with the kinesic actions and facial expressions in the scene. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show Mrs. Huang dancing with her son-in-law and both of them looking happy. Her son-in-law has no idea that his mother-in-law is making malicious remarks about him and his wife right under his nose.

In the English subtitles, "as skinny as a monster" is translated as "how skinny you've become", with the subtitler adopting dynamic equivalence to generate a similar effect to that of the

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[69] The literal translation of the phrase in the Chinese original is "as skinny as a monster" (瘦的像妖怪一样). I have decided to use this literal translation for the purpose of presenting the original element, although the equivalent expression in English would be 'as skinny as a skeleton'.

original. The simile is replaced by an exclamatory sentence, which omits the image of monstrosity and so the humorous effect is dramatically downgraded. In spite of this loss of this linguistic humour, a comedic effect is preserved in the English subtitles. This stems from the incongruity of Mrs. Huang claiming not to be a racist while looking down on her black American son-in-law for not being as successful as Obama and Jordan: two of the best-known black public figures in the world. To summarise, the verbal mode and non-verbal modes combine to enable the transfer of humour to the TL in this example.

4.6.2.2   Dialect humour

Finding Mr. Right is not only a multilingual film, it is also a multi-dialect film. This amplifies the challenges for the subtitler. Hatim and Mason argue that "Language varieties correspond to geographical variation, giving rise to different geographical dialects" (1990, p.40). Such language varieties may also be used to generate humour, as the two examples in this section show. Example 1 concerns the Beijing dialect, while Example 2 deals with the Northeastern dialect.

Example 1 Beijing dialect

Example background
Jiajia arrives in Seattle and meets Frank, the driver, who is late picking her up to take her to the maternity centre. Jiajia is furious when she finds Frank's laboratory mouse in his car.

Chinese lines
佳佳： 开门儿，你快点儿。你养什么老鼠呀。禽流感你不知道吗，你？
弗兰克：对不起，无菌的。
佳佳：无菌什么呀。你把老鼠孕妇关一块儿，像话儿吗？你这车我做不了。

Chinese subtitles
佳佳：开门，你快点。你养什么老鼠呀。有禽流感你不知道吗？
弗兰克：对不起，无菌的。

佳佳：什么无菌呀。你把老鼠和孕妇关在一起像话吗？这车我做不了。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: Open the door. Hurry up. Why don't you raise a mouse? You haven't heard of the bird flu, you?

Frank: I'm sorry. It's sterile.

Jiajia: How is it sterile? You lock a pregnant woman with a mouse just beside her, don't you think you are reasonable? I can't get in this car.

English subtitles

Jiajia: Open up now. Is that a mouse? Haven't you heard of the bird flu?

Frank: I'm sorry. It's sterile.

Jiajia: How come! You let a pregnant woman sit beside a mouse? I'm not getting in this car.

Screenshots
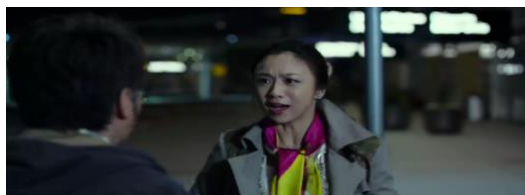
Figure 4.3 Author's screenshot shows that Jiajia argues with Frank and she looks angry (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.4 Author's screenshot depicting Frank's calm look (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

The Chinese subtitles omit *Erhua* and thus differ from the Chinese lines of dialogue. The Beijing dialect is used to convey Jiajia's annoyance with Frank for arriving late to pick her up. Jiajia speaks it at a fast tempo and uses *Erhua* when she says the words for "hurry up" (快点儿), "door" (门儿) and "together" (一块儿). This tones down their standardised pronunciation (Mandarin) and augments the comic effect in this scene. Another characteristic of the Beijing dialect which appears in this example is the repetition of the pronoun "you" at the end of a phrase or sentence: "You haven't heard of the bird flu, you?" (你不知道吗你). This intensifies the tone and underlines the vehemence of Jiajia's attack on Frank. The comedy

which stems from the Beijing dialect is due to the Chinese audience's understanding of the stereotype associated with this accent, which is used to comic effect in *Xiangsheng* and jerk literature. Jiajia's utterances in the Beijing dialect reference these forms of comic performance and literature that were discussed in a previous chapter.

The humour in this scene arises not only from the Beijing dialect, but also from the situation. Jiajia asks Frank to open the door in a commanding tone but then screams and bangs the door to grab his attention. Humour is triggered by Jiajia's exaggerated reaction of fear at finding Frank's laboratory mouse in the car and her exaggerated claims that his mouse could give her bird flu. Her anger and fear contrast strikingly with Frank's calm look to reinforce the verbal humour (Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

The subtitler has to omit the *Erhua* in the English subtitles. Consequently, the comic effect of the Beijing dialect is lost in the English subtitles. The scene's situational humour, though, is meaningfully transferred through the English subtitles by their interaction with the non-verbal modes. This example shows that the verbal mode and non-verbal modes play equally important roles in the process of generating humour in the TL.

Example 2: Northeastern dialect

Example background

Jiajia is at the police station where a policewoman asks her questions about her trip to the US.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

佳佳：我美国电影看多了，所以对家的憧憬就是爸爸妈妈，还有两个非常非常可爱的宝宝，一条大狗。不过 Julie 对狗毛过敏，所以我们就不能养。

警官：狗不是问题，奥巴马的闺女对狗毛也过敏，结果人家养了一条葡萄牙水犬，人养老好了，什么事也没有。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: I have watched so many American films, and my ideal family consists of a couple with two extremely cute kids, and a dog. But Julie is allergic to the hair of dogs. So we can't raise dogs.

Policewoman: Dog is not an issue. Obama's daughter is allergic to dog's hair too. But they raise a Portuguese Water dog, and it is raised so good. Everything is fine.

English subtitles

Jiajia: In my mind, the perfect family consists of a couple with two extremely cute kids, and a dog. But Julie is allergic to dogs. So we can't have one.

Policewoman: That's not an issue. Obama's daughter is allergic to dogs too. But they have a Portuguese Water dog, and everything's fine.

Screenshots

Figure 4.5 Author's screenshot shows that the policewoman is full of excitement (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.6 Author's screenshot depicting Jiajia's astonished facial expression (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

Humour is generated by the abstract nature of the conversation – instead of discussing immigration, the women discuss allergies to dogs. It is also generated from the distance between Jiajia's dream of married bliss and the situation in which she actually finds herself. Humour is further generated by the surprise triggered when the policewoman speaks a rustic Northeastern Chinese dialect. Jiajia is being questioned by an Asian-American female police officer. Jiajia believes the policewoman is unable to speak Mandarin Chinese because she communicates with Frank in English. The policewoman mostly keeps quiet throughout the conversation. She only interjects when Jiajia talks about her perfect family because this speaks

to the policewoman's values. Humour occurs when the officer bangs the desk, looks excited and unexpectedly speaks in the Northeastern Chinese dialect (Figure 4.5). Jiajia's astonished facial expression reinforces the verbal humour (Figure 4.6). This Northeastern dialect triggers humour because the rustic accent is frequently used on stage in *Xiaopin* comic performances. The Chinese audience is likely to be familiar with and hold a stereotypical view of the Northeastern dialect as a result of the widespread popularity of *Xiaopin*.[70]

The translation of this dialect humour poses a challenge for the subtitler, and the comic effect of the Northeastern dialect is lost in the English subtitles. The subtitler employs an approach of dynamic equivalence to ensure meaning is transferred to the SL. The interplay of non-verbal modes compensates, to a certain degree, for the loss of the phonological humour associated with the dialect.

In summary, the two examples in this section show that SL dialect humour is often lost in English subtitles. Humour in the original Chinese stems from the stereotypical view of specific dialects held by the domestic audience. It is possible in principle for subtitlers to create English subtitles that communicate dialect features. However, in these examples, the English subtitles achieve dynamic equivalence with the SL in meaning, rather than dialect. This is perhaps because, as Hatim and Mason suggest, "Rendering dialect by dialect runs the risk of creating unintended effects" (1990, p.41). The difficulty lies in using TL dialect to reproduce a similar humorous effect without altering the semantic sense of the dialogue in the SL. The fact is that the English-speaking audience are not able to detect, let alone decipher, the phonological differences in Chinese dialects, and their understanding of the humour here chiefly relies on the subtitles. As such, all phonological humour is lost, but humour arises at a different level via the complex interaction of other multimodal factors. As in other examples, humour here relies on the situation and non-verbal modes working together. Non-verbal modes (facial expressions) interact with the verbal mode, and compensate to some extent for the loss of the dialect humour.

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[70] There is further discussion of the Northeastern dialect in the context of Chinese martial arts comedy in Chapter 6.

Sexual humour is hard to subtitle because the social mores in China are very different from those in large parts of the anglophone world. The following example illustrates the ways in which the subtitler navigates those differences when jokes are crafted around such attitudes.

Example

Example background

Jiajia accompanies Frank to his ex-wife's wedding. She poses as Frank's girlfriend to make his ex-wife jealous.

English lines (subtitles)[71]

Jiajia: Frank is the most wonderful father in the world. He's the best guy. And, um, Frank is <u>awesome</u> in bed, so you'd better work very very very hard.

Richard: Well, this is indeed an important issue.

Frank's ex-wife: Frank, your girlfriend is very sweet. How come you never introduced her to me?

Chinese subtitles

佳佳：Frank 是世界上最好的父亲也是最好的男人。还有，Frank 在床上也<u>很厉害</u>，你可也要非常非常努力哦。

理查德: 哦，这是个重要的问题。

弗兰克前妻：你的女朋友非常不错，怎么不早点介绍我认识。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: Frank is the best father and man in the world. And Frank is super good in bed, so you need to work very very hard.

Richard: Well, this is an important issue.

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[71] This film's transcultural setting and bilingual dialogue make it a complex case study to explore humour transfer through subtitles. While this thesis focuses on the translation of humour from Chinese into English, the discussion of humour transfer in the opposite direction (from English to Chinese) is interesting because the Chinese characters in the film live in Seattle where they use English in everyday communication.

Frank's ex-wife: Frank, your girlfriend is very nice. How come you never introduced her to me?

Screenshots

Figure 4.7 Author's screenshot depicting Frank's surprised facial expression (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.8 Author's screenshot depicting Richard looking embarrassed (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

Humour in this instance stems from the incongruity triggered by a joke related to sex. Frank's ex-wife introduces her new husband, Richard (an executive director of a finance company), to Frank and Jiajia. To flatter Frank in the face of his ex-wife's excitement at finding a rich and successful new husband, Jiajia makes a highly inappropriate comment about Frank's prowess in bed. Jiajia's kinesic gestures (she crooks her finger to beckon Richard) suggests that she has a secret to share with Richard, which arouses his curiosity. However, what amuses and surprises the audience is that she hails Frank as a good sexual partner Frank and asks Richard to work on his sex. This confounds the audience's expectation and generates the incongruity. Humour is generated by the discrepancy between Jiajia's claim about Frank's superlative sexual performance and the audience's knowledge that Jiajia has no way of knowing this because she and Frank are not intimate. Frank's surprised facial expression (Figure 4.7) mirrors the audience's surprise.

In the English original, Jiajia claims "Frank is awesome in bed", which is an indirect allusion to his sexual skills. The use of a euphemistic expression tones down the sexual taboo which could otherwise trigger an embarrassed reaction in the target audience. It is notable that the semantic content of "awesome" is maintained in both the SL and TL. Jiajia then teases Richard by suggesting "You'd better work very very very hard". The exaggeration in the repetitive use of "very" implies Richard is too old to match Frank's sexual performance easily. Teasing often communicates an element of criticism in humorous interactions (Attardo 1994a, pp.320-

321).[72] The different facial expressions displayed by Frank and Richard also trigger laughter. Figure 4.7 shows Frank looking astonished, while Jiajia looks content; in Figure 4.8, Richard looks embarrassed. It is interesting to note that Jiajia says "very very very hard" deliberately slowly and with relish. In a low and husky tone, such sexual comment serves to poke fun at Frank's ex-wife for her loss of this man she did not appreciate.[73] According to Attardo et al., "The most commonly noted index of ironical intent is intonation" (2013, p.3). Exaggerated pitch is associated with sarcasm (Attardo et al. 2003 cited in Attardo et al. 2013, p.3). This sexual joke can be interpreted as satirising women who have cynical and material views of marriage.

In the Chinese subtitles, the subtitler uses the strategy of dynamic equivalence to soften the sexual humour in transferring it to the receiving culture. The relevant Chinese subtitle translates "You'd better very very very hard" as '你可也要非常非常努力哦'. The subtitler uses an exclamatory sentence in the Chinese version to eliminate the ironic flavour of the original. The linguistic register in the Chinese subtitles is colloquial and attempts to restore a coquettish tone, reflecting the female subtitler's manipulation of the text to cater to Chinese urban female audiences. The transnational nature of the film, with its US setting and characters, means it can be more sexually explicit. The Chinese subtitles maintain the comedic effect of the sexual humour in the original by means of supplementation. As Von Flotow (1991, pp.70-79) proposes, the use of supplementation is a cue for the translator to intervene deliberately in the text, and such a strategy is associated with feminist translators who propose a creative approach to translation. [74] Moreover, it is worthy of note that the

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[72] Humour has different communicative functions in different contexts. There are various types of humorous interaction, such as joke telling, conversational jokes and ritual joking. Teasing falls under the subgenre of conversational jokes (Attardo 1994a, pp.320-322). It is defined as "A device for reformulating others' speech and actions, and thereby proposing an alternative reality, without seriously doing so" (Mulkay cited in Attardo 1994a, p.321).

[73] Before immigrating to the US and ending up as a driver, Frank was a famous cardiologist working in a prestigious hospital in China's capital, Beijing. He gives up his highly paid job as a doctor and settles in the US with a more menial job because his wife is a busy businesswoman who cannot spare any time to look after their daughter and family.

[74] The English subtitler of *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), Sara Huang (黄迅), is a female translator. Von Flotow (1991, p.70) suggests that supplementation, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking are effective strategies for feminist translators to use in translating texts. Supplementation is used to compensate for the differences between languages (Von Flotow 1991, p.74). The use of prefacing and footnoting underlines a feminist translator's active presence in the text, such as with a signature in italics in a footnote, and womanhandling text in a preface (Von Flotow 1991, p.76). Hijacking means replacing generic male terms with feminine or neutral expressions (Von Flotow 1991, p.79).

characters' English names are retained in the Chinese subtitles, and this does not affect the audience's understanding of the plot. Using English names is popular among young people in China, and the Chinese audience, especially the urban female audience, would be familiar with frequently used English names like Richard, Frank, Annie. Humour is also generated by co-deployment of different semiotic modes that interact with the verbal mode (the subtitles), so both the verbal mode and non-verbal modes are integral to the humour transfer.

4.6.3 Heterogeneous complex humour

This section presents analyses of three examples from this film of heterogeneous complex humour, in which two or more types of audiovisual humour combine to create comedic effects.

Example 1 wordplay and code-switching humour

Example background

Jiajia talks with a US immigration officer when she arrives in Seattle.

English and Chinese lines

Jiajia: Hello.

Immigration officer: Good evening. What is the purpose of your visit?

Jiajia: Ha?

Immigration officer: Why do you come to the US?

Jiajia: Oh, em… to travel.

Immigration officer: Are you alone? You are single?

Jiajia: Single? Ah, I am a single lady, I am a single lady. I am a single lady, I am…

Immigration officer: Stop that. Many people would go to Los Angeles and New York for holiday. Why do you come to Seattle?

Jiajia: Can you say again?

Immigration officer: I ask why you come to Seattle.

Jiajia: Movie. Movie. *Sleepless in Seattle*. You know that I love that movie. I love it.

Immigration officer: Look to the camera. No smiling. Romantic love. Enjoy your stay here.

Jiajia: 成了，终于拿到手六个月。Thank you. Thank you.

Immigration officer: Next.

Chinese subtitles[75]

佳佳：你好。

边检官：晚安，你此行的目的是什么？你为什么来美国？

佳佳：哦，旅行。

边检官（男）：你独自一人吗？你是一个人吗？

佳佳：一个人？I am single lady, I am single lady.

边检官（男）：停，停。很多人旅行会去洛杉矶或者纽约，你问什么来西雅图？

佳佳：你能再说一遍吗？

边检官（男）：我问你问什么来西雅图？

佳佳：哦，电影，电影。西雅图夜未眠。你知道那个吧，我爱那部电影，我超爱它。

边检官（男）：好，请看镜头。不要笑。浪漫的爱情故事，祝你在这里玩得愉快！

佳佳：成了，终于拿到六个月签证。谢谢，谢谢！

边检官（男）：下一个。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: Hello.

Immigration officer: Good night. What is the purpose of your visit? Why do you come to the US?

Jiajia: Ha?

Immigration officer: I ask why do you come to the US?

Jiajia: Oh, em… to travel.

Immigration officer: Are you alone? You are single?

Jiajia: Single? Ah, I am a single lady, I am a single lady.

Immigration officer: Stop, stop. Many people would go to Los Angeles and New York for holiday. Why do you come to Seattle?

Jiajia: I beg your pardon?

Immigration officer: I ask why do you come to Seattle.

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[75] The DVD subtitles have no punctuation. I have added it for the purpose of transcription to avoid confusion.

Jiajia: Oh, film, film. *Sleepless in Seattle*. You know that film! I love that film, I love it so much.

Immigration officer: Look at the camera. Don't smile. A romantic love story. Wish you a nice time here.

Jiajia: Yes, I finally got the visa for six months. Thank you. Thank you.

Immigration officer: Next.

Screenshots

Figure 4.9 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia looking serious (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.10 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia's confused smile (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.11 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia's hand gesture (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.12 Author's screenshot depicting the immigration officer's facial expression (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.13 Author's screenshot depicting the immigration officer's surprised facial expression (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

This example is a scene at a US airport, and all the elements are exclusively American. The dialogue is in English, apart from a single line, and the use of a famous song by Beyoncé caters for the English-speaking audience. Much of the humour in this scene results from linguistic elements related to the female protagonist's communication difficulties. There are three borders at play in this scene: the literal border between the US and other countries, the border between this film and *Sleepless in Seattle,* and the linguistic border between languages. It makes many visual and spoken references to the 1993 Nora Ephron hit *Sleepless in Seattle* (Chang 2013). Because she is a fan of *Sleepless in Seattle*, Jiajia has travelled to the city to give birth to the child fathered by her married tycoon lover. Her incorrect pronunciation when mentioning the film makes us laugh. Humour in relation to the 'linguistic border' (bilingualism) comes from the recurring misunderstandings in the transcultural dialogue.

Finding Mr. Right is a transcultural artefact and generates humour from its transcultural dialogues.[76] Transcultural flows are "The process of borrowing, blending, remarking and returning to the process of alternative cultural production" (Pennycook 2006, p.6). The translation of transcultural humour is a complicated task, especially with regard to cultural humour and VEH. The difficulty resides in how to bridge cultural gaps and reproduce humorous effects in receiving cultures if there are no equivalent cultural terms in the TL. Croitoru (2013, p.27) suggests that, under the influence of transcultural flows, translation goes far beyond being a process of encoding and decoding across languages because transcultural flows are viewed as both fluidity and fixity. As Pennycook points out, "Cultural and linguistic forms are always in a state of flux, always changing, always part of a process of the refashioning of identity" (2006, p.6). The dynamic aspect of transcultural flows poses a challenge for the translator as he/she seeks to replicate comic effects for audiences inhabiting another linguistic and cultural environment. The understanding of humour in a specific language depends on the shared social background of its speakers (Raskin 1984, p.16). As a mediator between cultures and languages, the translator needs to consider using reformulations and reconceptualisations to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps between the SL and TL (Croitoru 2013, pp.27-28).

The use of repetition and surprise contributes to the humour in this example. According to Buijzen and Valkenburg, "Repetition or replay of the same situation" (2004, p.154) is an important technique in audiovisual humour. The scene in this example contains a number of repetitions when Jiajia is answering the immigration officer's questions. The first occurrence is during the officer's questioning of Jiajia about why she has come to the US. Jiajia only answers "Ha?" Her confused smile and the shaking of her head reinforce the verbal humour (Figure 4.10). A repetition of Jiajia shaking her head with an embarrassed smile then occurs when the officer asks her "Are you alone?'' Jiajia's reaction again confirms her lack of any great proficiency in English (Figure 4.10). The officer therefore rephrases his question to "You are single'?' Humour here is generated by wordplay in the form of a pun. Puns produce humour by using words with different meanings but the same pronunciation to create ambiguity

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[76] Dialogues refer to exchanges between the two cultures featured in the film.

(Wang 2014, p.276). 'Single' is polysemic, possibly referring to an unmarried person or to being unaccompanied, depending on the context. Humour here results from Jiajia's misunderstanding of 'single' as referring to her marital status. The eccentric manner of her reply also reinforces the verbal humour. Rather than just answering the question in English, she sings "I'm single lady, I'm single lady" in a parody of American hip-hop icon Beyoncé's 2008 hit *Single Ladies*.

As Tsakona points out, "parody is a form of sophisticated humour" (2018, p.2). She also argues that there is an intimate connection between parody and intertextuality, and recognition lies at the heart of humour generated through parody (Tsakona 2018, p.2). Failure to decode the parody in this scene could possibly lead to a loss of humour in the Chinese subtitles. The subtitler's strategy is to use a zero translation for the transposition of "I'm a single lady" into the Chinese subtitles. Although using such a strategy is guaranteed to retain the exotic flavour of the original in the TL, the completely alien text may present a linguistic barrier for the Chinese audience to perceive the humour. As a chick flick, this film targets a female audience, but the question is whether even an urban female audience in China will recognise Beyoncé's pop song and still perceive the humour on the level of intertextuality if they cannot engage with the pun (polysemy). The humour based on parody is probably lost. According to Attardo (2001, p.70), the hearer could potentially enjoy the mocking in some of these humorous instances even if the intertextual reference is inaccessible. In the multimodal context, humour does not rely exclusively on the verbal mode. Jiajia's exaggerated and irreverent conduct at border control is the source of humour for the Chinese audience. She astonishes the immigration officer (Figure 4.12). His surprised facial expression reinforces the verbal humour (Figure 4.13). In comparison with other people in the scene around her, who are behaving soberly as one would expect at border control, Jiajia's kinesic gestures as she dances, waving her arms (Figure 4.11) and stamping her feet with joy, contribute to the comic effect. Although the transfer of humour related to intertextuality in the SL is less than satisfactory, the subtitler makes the transposition of humour to the TL possible by weaving together the verbal mode and non-verbal modes.

The final repetition of Jiajia expressing her incomprehension occurs when the officer asks why she has come to Seattle instead of New York or Los Angeles. Again, the officer's question is

beyond her grasp, and she asks him to repeat it. Jiajia understands eventually, but her incorrect pronunciation of the word "movie" [ˈmuːvi] as "mowee" [ˈmuːwi] becomes the butt of the humour. The motivation behind laughter in this case is people feeling superior about another's incompetence. As Morreall notes, superiority theory suggests that laughter arises due to "Human incompetence, clumsiness, clowning and misfortune" (1987, p.140). Jiajia's ecstatic facial expression contrasts sharply with that of the weary immigration officer as he loses patience (Figure 4.13), which helps to emphasise the humour.

Code-switching occurs when the officer returns Jiajia's passport, permitting her to stay in the US for six months. Jiajia is so excited that she speaks Chinese. The incongruity triggered by the sudden change from English to Chinese produces a comic effect. However, as code-switching is a blind spot for the English-speaking audience, the code-switching humour of this moment in the SL is lost in the TL as a result of linguistic flattening.

Finding Mr Right illustrates the multimodal complexity of communicating comic effects through subtitling. Within the film, a number of modes interconnect: non-verbal modes (facial expressions, kinesic actions and gestures) work together with the verbal mode to reinforce comic effects. This example demonstrates that the verbal mode and non-verbal modes are complementary in the process of humour transfer. It is interesting to note that the subtitler adopts literal translation to ensure that humour from the SL is at least partially preserved in the Chinese subtitles. However, the Chinese subtitles are flawed, and there is a noticeable mistake in the translation of "good evening", which is rendered as "good night" ('晚安'). "Good evening" is a polite greeting used in the evening, while "good night" is used to say goodbye or express best wishes before going to bed at night. Moreover, the adoption of a zero translation strategy leads to a loss of the humour from the SL wordplay.

Example 2 Wordplay and situational humour

Example background

Jiajia is being interrogated at the police station, with Frank's daughter, Julie, acting as her interpreter.

Chinese and English lines

佳佳：我是带她来的纽约玩儿的，顺道待她来看她爸。哎对，她爸爸实在考那个叫什么 那个 bird, 知道吧？你赶紧给他翻译翻译，这个脑残啊。

Julie: She says you're stupid, you're an idiot. She says she's not my guardian and she knows that it's illegal for her to take a minor away from home without the guardian's consent, but she doesn't care about the laws in this country. She says in the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*, she's seen the Empire State Building.

佳佳：就这个，就这个。

Chinese subtitles

佳佳：我是带她来的纽约玩的，顺道待她来看她爸爸。对，她爸爸是在考那个叫什么 那个 bird, 知道吧？你赶紧给他翻译翻译了，这个脑残。

茱莉：她说你很笨，你脑子有病。她说她不是我的监护人，也知道带未成年人在没有得到监护人同意的情况下私自离开家是违法的，但是她不在乎你们的法律，她说西雅图夜未眠里的那个帝国大厦。

佳佳：就这个，就这个。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: I brought her to visit New York, and on the way to see her dad. Her father is taking something called the 'bird'.

Policeman: Please sit down.

Jiajia: You know? Translating this to him such an idiot.

Julie: She says you're stupid and you're frankly insane. She says that she's not my guardian and she knows that it's illegal for her to take me away from home without the guardian's consent, but she doesn't care about the laws of your country. She says she has seen the Empire State Building in the film *Sleepless in Seattle.*

Jiajia: Yes. That's it. That's it.

English subtitles

Jiajia: I brought her here to have some fun, and to visit her dad. He's taking that… what's it called. Yes. The "bird".

Policeman: Please sit down.

Jiajia: You know? Now translate for this idiot.

Julie: She says you're stupid, you're an idiot. She says she's not my guardian and she knows that it's illegal for her to take a minor away from home without the guardian's consent, but she doesn't care about the laws in this country. She says in the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*, she's seen the Empire State Building.

Jiajia: Yes. That's right.

Screenshots

Figure 4.14 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia's kinesic gestures (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.15 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia's hand gestures (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.16 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia looking happy and satisfied (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

The two aspects that combine to cause humour in this instance are wordplay on "bird" and incongruity in the process of the police investigation. Initially, "bird" is the key term for generating humour in this scene. In response to the policeman's inquiry, Jiajia explains that she is visiting New York to see Julie's father who is taking an exam called the "bird". In fact, the exam has nothing to do with a "bird"; it is the doctor's licence examination organised by the Federation of State Medical *Boards*. Jiajia's misunderstanding caused by the phonetic similarity between 'bird' and 'board' leads to laughter, especially when accompanied by her kinesic gestures (she suddenly stands up and waves her arms like a flying bird, as shown in Figure 4.14). Gestures are often used to achieve communication if linguistic resources fail (O'Sullivan 2011, p.189). It is interesting to note that "bird" remains untranslated in the Chinese subtitles. The subtitler carries out a zero translation to preserve this exotic element from the SL. This is because the utterance of "bird" in the acoustic channel combines well with the kinesic mode (Jiajia imitating a flying bird) to enable the Chinese audience to understand the semantic reference of "bird". As Marais observes, "Communication and meaning-making and meaning-taking usually takes place with various modalities or mediums at the same time" (2018, p.8). This shows that the subtitler's choice of strategies like zero translation draws on the interactions of different modes when meaning is multimodally created through the process of subtitling. However, he/she might also have considered this translation strategy to be applicable because the film's main target audience is urban female viewers. This suggests that Chinese urban female audiences are expected to have an average level of proficiency in English which enables them to understand some basic English words, such as "bird".[77]

Additionally, humour results from Jiajia's incongruous behaviour during her interrogation, which is due to her inability to understand English. She asks Julie to be her interpreter so the policeman can release them. What amuses the audience is that Julie deliberately gets Jiajia into trouble. However, Jiajia's lack of English means she does not know this is happening. Humour is generated by the contradiction between words and non-verbal actions in the scene. Jiajia's kinesic actions (nodding her head and giving Julie a thumbs up, as shown in Figure 4.15)

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[77]As a result of globalisation, English is now widely used in China. Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies in 1978, Chinese people nationwide have enthusiastically been learning English (Liang B 2016, pp.26-28). There are 250-350 million users of English in Mainland China (Gil and Adamson 2011 cited in Liang B 2016, pp.26-28).

and her satisfied facial expression (Figure 4.16) clash to hilarious effect with Julie's words ("She says you're stupid, you're an idiot. She doesn't care about the laws in this country"). The striking contrast between the different facial expressions of Jiajia (relieved and happy) and the policeman (serious, glum and puzzled) also augments the comic effect.

Humour is successfully delivered in both the SL and TL but in different ways. The employment of a zero translation strategy evidences a high level of subtitling creativity. In terms of the transfer of situational humour, non-verbal modes are pivotal in the interplay between different semiotic modes, and predominate over the verbal mode in provoking humour.

Example 3 Code-switching humour, situational humour and dialect humour

Example background

When Jiajia returns to the maternity centre after celebrating Christmas with Frank and his daughter, she finds fellow resident Yi about to deliver her baby.

Chinese and English lines

佳佳：你尿尿了！天啊，我不敢再坐那个沙发了。

逸：是羊水。麻烦你帮我打个 911。

佳佳：是羊水。

逸：我要生了。文佳佳，麻烦你帮我打个 911。

佳佳：哦。

逸：快一点儿，sorry!

佳佳：喂，woman, 不对，不对。baby，等会儿，你先赶紧跟他说两句，hello. baby, 有个女人要生孩子了，hurry, hurry, hurry. 哎呀，该死的英文。

逸：你别走，佳佳。佳佳!

佳佳：我又不会接生。

○○○○○○

佳佳：你个破美国，你们仗着自己地儿大，结果路上连个人影儿也没有，害老娘跑了三个街区。

Chinese subtitles

佳佳：你尿尿了！天啊，我不敢再坐那个沙发了。

逸：是羊水。麻烦你帮我打个 911。

佳佳：是羊水。

逸：我要生了。文佳佳，麻烦你帮我打个 911。快一点。对不起。

佳佳：喂，对，女人孩子，等会儿，你先赶紧跟他说两句，喂，孩子，有个女人要生孩子了，快啊，快啊。该死的英文。

逸：你别走，佳佳。佳佳!

佳佳：我又不会接生。

。。。。。。

佳佳：你个破美国，你们仗着自己地方大，路上连个<u>人影</u>也没有，害<u>老娘</u>跑了三个街区。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Jiajia: You had a pee. Oh, God. I will never sit on that sofa again.

Yi: It is the amniotic fluid. Please dial 911 for me. My water has broken. I am about to labour. Jiajia, please dial 911. Hurry. Sorry.

Jiajia: Hello. Yes… Woman… Baby… Wait for a second, you talk to him. Hello. Baby. There is a woman who is going to deliver a baby. Very urgent. Hurry hurry. My damn English.

Yi: Jiajia, don't leave. Jiajia, Jiajia.

Jiajia: I don't know how to deliver your baby.

…

Jiajia: You broken America, just because it's a big place, not <u>a single soul</u> can be found in the street. I <u>fucking</u> had to run three blocks.

English subtitles

Jiajia: You peed. I will never sit on that couch again.

Yi: My water broke. Please dial 911 for me. The water broke. The baby's coming out. Jiajia, please dial 911. Hurry. Sorry.

Jiajia: Hello. Um…Woman. Baby. Hang on. You talk to him.

Hello. Baby. There's a baby coming out. Very urgent. Hurry hurry. Damn the language.

Yi: Jiajia, don't go.

Jiajia: I don't know how to deliver your baby.

…

Jiajia: This country sucks. All this space and <u>no one</u> on the streets. I <u>had to</u> run three blocks.

Screenshots
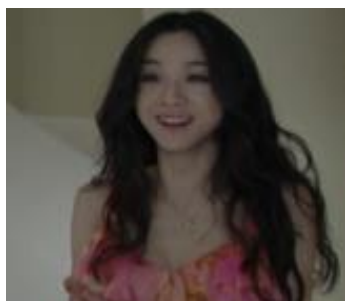
Figure 4.17 Author's screenshot depicting jiajia teasing Yi with a laughter (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.18 Author's screenshot depicting the character Jiajia's harried facial expression (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Figure 4.19 Author's screenshot depicting the character Yi looking astonished (Finding Mr. Right 2013).

Analysis

Three sources combine to deliver the humour in this example: code-switching, the comic situation, and use of the Beijing dialect. Jiajia returns to the maternity centre to find Yi standing on the sofa. Thinking Yi has urinated, Jiajia teases her and laughs in her face (Figure 4.17). The humorous perlocutionary meaning derives from Jiajia's feeling of superiority in the face of Yi's obvious embarrassment. Having corrected the misunderstanding, Yi asks Jiajia to call 911 for an ambulance to take her to the hospital. This moment is soundtracked by high-pitched, fast and rhythmic background music to underline the urgency of Yi's predicament. Humour stems from the incongruity engendered by code-switching when Jiajia speaks to the 911 operator. She code-switches because her limited language skills prevent her from making herself understood in English. Her harried facial expressions and kinesic gestures (pulling at

her hair) reinforce the humour triggered by her code-switching (Figure 4.18). Paralanguage (voice) also plays a key role in the interplay between verbal and non-verbal modes and reinforces the code-switching humour. On the line, we hear the operator's soft, measured voice, which contrasts with Jiajia's. During the phone call, Jiajia speaks only a few English words ("woman", "baby", "hurry"), indicating both her panic and poor English. The tempo of her voice increases when she repeats "hurry" in English, which underlines how desperately Jiajia needs help. Her voice then slows and takes on a staccato rhythm which contrasts with Yi's screams. When Jiajia speaks Chinese, her voice speeds up and becomes higher-pitched with a rising intonation. In addition, the code-switching humour is further reinforced by Yi and Jiajia's different facial expressions. It is interesting to note the stark contrast between Jiajia's look of desperation in Figure 4.18 and Yi's astonished face in Figure 4.19.

Supplementary humour is generated by the comic situation and the discrepancy between what Yi hopes to achieve and what she and Jiajia can actually accomplish. Jiajia passes the phone to Yi, hoping she herself can speak with the operator. However, Yi can only scream, in so much pain that she is unable to speak a word. The slow and gentle background music contrasts with Yi's anguished expression and cries of pain, enhancing the humorous effect. After Jiajia is eventually able to send Yi to the hospital, she complains that the US is too big to find anyone on the street. Humour springs from Jiajia's use of the Beijing dialect, which reveals her resentment, dissatisfaction and disappointment. As previously discussed, the Beijing dialect is known for its heavy use of the 'r' sound (*Erhua*) at the end of nouns, making them sound casual. In this scene, Jiajia uses it on Chinese terms including "place" ('地儿') and "a single soul" ('人影儿'). By this point, Jiajia is boiling with rage and speaking rapidly.[78] As Chiaro (2005b, p.6) observes, women's use of VEH in comedies is characterised by fast talk. Chiaro further points out "When a funny lady gets angry, … she explodes into a hilarious monologue which consists of uttering as many words as she can at break neck speed" (2005b, pp.6-7). The Jiajia fast talking in the Beijing dialect emphasises her directness as a Beijing girl. Her use of the swear word "fucking" contradicts her genteel physical appearance, and the mismatch

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[78] Speed is a typical technique used in order to elicit humour (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.154).

with the audience's concept of a lady generates a comic effect. However, there is no transfer of the dialect humour to the English subtitles so it is erased.

The translation of the Chinese dialogue in the English subtitles is overly flat, losing the overtones of anger and disappointment in the original text. In the English subtitles, "You broken America" is translated as "This country sucks". Saying something '*sucks*' is slang used mainly in the US, which indicates that "a person or thing is bad or unpleasant" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'sucks'). The subtitler adopts the strategy of amplification, which intensifies the meaning from the SL and emphasises Jiajia's negative experience of the US. In terms of the translation of "I had to run like a motherfucker for three blocks", the subtitler adopts strategies of neutralisation and omission. In the Chinese original, 老娘 literally means 'old mother' or 'old lady'. Here, Jiajia refers to herself using this feminine word to indicate that she is a powerful woman, which reflects the post-feminist reading of chick flicks as challenging patriarchal ideology and underlining the importance of female gender identity. The word has connotations of 'fuck' or 'fucking' and so functions as a swear word. Humour occurs when Jiajia uses the word in a self-ironic and exaggerated way. However, its English counterpart has no direct equivalence to 'old mother', and this aspect is completely eradicated in the English subtitles. The English subtitles are therefore less hard-hitting than the SL in their use of swear words. The subtitler's choice of neutralisation and omission tones down Jiajia's anger and weakens the comic juxtaposition of genteel, ladylike behaviour with vulgar expletives, which is a key part of the humour in the Chinese original.

This example features a combination of three different types of humour. The situational humour works perfectly in the English subtitles thanks to the interplay of different modes. The verbal mode and non-verbal modes are complementary, working together to produce a strong comic effect and successful humour transfer to the TL. Conversely, the transfer of code-switching humour and dialect humour fails so these types trigger no humorous reaction in English-speaking audiences. Although the loss of VEH is evident, the situational humour is generally maintained in the TL.

4.7   Conclusion

Finding Mr. Right is a key case study for subtitling studies because it underscores the translation challenges posed by a film and genre offering humorous Chinese social commentary to English-speaking audiences for whom such social commentary is less relevant. Moreover, it is an important text for the discipline because of its innate and intrinsic use of multiple languages, cultures and dialects. It also shows the way in which the subtitling process can be shaped by a film's target audience. This chapter has paid special attention to the translation of humour for the Chinese urban female audience targeted by this transnational film. This example suggests that this is expected to have some knowledge of the English language and American culture, which can facilitate the transfer of humour in a transnational context. This is evidenced by the use of strategies such as zero translation and foreignisation without weakening the humour of the original film. The audience's understanding of transcultural humour is not static, permanently constrained by contextual information and language proficiency. The more they understand the culture depicted on-screen, the less cultural differences inhibit their understanding of transcultural humour. This poses a challenge for the subtitler, who has to judge the target audience's likely perception of humour and horizon of expectation to implement appropriate strategies. If the subtitler fails in this endeavour, viewers may perceive the mistranslation of humour, detracting from their enjoyment of the film.[79] As Tuominen (2018, p.73) suggests, there is strong link between the quality of the translation and the audience's response to the humour. It is also interesting to note that American culture (e.g. through references to *Sleepless in Seattle*) has already been exported to some degree to Chinese viewers and is being retranslated back to English-speaking audiences as the target culture for this subtitled film. Humour can transcend national and cultural differences, and works in more than one national or linguistic context because comprehension of at least some of the humour relies on the target audience's familiarity with certain cultural references. According to Kostogriz, in transcultural situations, "transcultural space between cultural binaries is asymmetrical" and offers "a possibility of constructing new

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[79] For subtitlers, emotional and cognitive empathy (anticipating the viewer's reaction and viewpoint) is instrumental in adopting appropriate translation strategies (Gambier 2018, p.48). Gambier points out that "age, sex, education background, reading skills, reading habits, reading rate, oral and reading comprehension in one's mother tongue, frequency and volume of AVT consumption, AVT habits (opinion and preference), command of foreign languages, degree of hearing loss, age of onset of hearing loss, type of language of daily use" (2018, p.53) are all aspects of the audience that need to be considered as part of the subtitling process.

meanings" (2004, p.6). That is, the same instances of humour may have different meanings and be perceived in different ways in the original film and the subtitled version.

This chapter pushes for a reappraisal of semiotic interaction and multimodality because these important concepts are widely recognised yet little explored in relation to humour in audiovisual products. Semiotic modes in the construction of meaning are hierarchically distributed. As the examples in this chapter have demonstrated, in some cases, verbal modes predominate over non-verbal modes (visual mode, kinesic modes, acoustic mode) in the transfer of humour. In other cases, humour relies on a combination of both verbal and non-verbal modes. The subtitler takes multimodal textual cohesion into account.[80] Taylor (2016, p.225) points out that the subtitling of a film is considered to be coherent if the semantic content of modes in both the acoustic and visual channels combines so that TL audiences fully understand the plot. In other words, the subtitler needs to consider the complex interplay of modes in the creation of meaning.

The chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* offers a variety of humour types, such as Chinese cultural humour, VEH and heterogeneous complex humour. Having analysed how the film's humour has been subtitled multimodally, it is interesting to note that, because of the film's bilingualism, neither the SL nor TL audience is able to watch it without subtitles. As the examples in this chapter illustrate, especially in the scenes where heterogeneous complex humour is at work, subtitles are an integral part of this film and actively create humour. Subtitles are part of the original film, not just an addition for foreign audiences. They are not a supplement, they are part and parcel of the film's humour generation.

Finding Mr Right underlines how difficult it is to subtitle Chinese cultural humour. It is worth noting how often in this film dynamic equivalence – a transparent and natural translation whose aim is to trigger a response in the TL that is similar to the original reaction in the SL

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[80] Multimodal textual cohesion means that in multimodal artefacts, different semiotic modes can interact to make meaning. According to Bianchi (2014, p.477), verbal humour, image and sound are integrated in AVT. Consequently, the subtitler does not solely concentrate on potential linguistic difficulties which could prevent a TL audience from understanding the translated humour. It is also important that the subtitler's choice of translation strategies fits into the film's multimodal context. The subtitler must pay special attention to multimodal textual cohesion to ensure the audiovisual humour is comprehensible to the TL audience.

(Nida 1964, p.165) – is the approach chosen to transfer cultural humour to the TL. This strategy retains cultural humour in the TL, yet this humour often differs from that in the original because it is difficult to transfer humour based on culture-specific social attitudes. This chapter has identified three subcategories of VEH in this film: dialect humour, wordplay and sexual humour. Sexual humour transfers well to the TL thanks to both the SL and the TL audiences share the same understanding of sex. In translating humour based on wordplay, the English subtitles rely on neutralisation and dynamic equivalence. Although such strategies prevent the TL audience from fully comprehending the SL verbal humour, humour is partially transferred to the TL due to the interaction of different semiotic modes in the process of humour transfer. As far as dialect humour is concerned, it is inevitable that humour related to specific dialects is lost in the TL. However, humour is still partially transferred to the TL because the non-verbal modes compensate for this linguistic loss. This demonstrates that subtitling practice in relation to dialect humour is not solely concerned with language itself. Despite the limitations of the subtitling medium, subtitles and different semiotic modes can interact to contribute jointly to humour transfer. Overall, the transfer of VEH shows that humour in the audiovisual context of a film is multimodally generated. Subtitles are only one component in humour generation, and they can combine with different semiotic modes to convey humour to the TL audience. This enables humour to transcend cultures and languages.

Chapter 5 The translation of humour in the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the way in which humour in the Chinese black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* is subtitled for audiences in English-speaking countries. This film has both a Mandarin version and a Sichuan dialect version. Humour works differently in each version. This chapter focuses on the Mandarin version because it is the only version that has been released on DVD with subtitles for anglophone audiences.[81] This chapter will highlight the importance of *Let the Bullets Fly* as a case study for subtitling studies as a result of the complex multimodal process of translation involved in the linguistic, cultural and semiotic transfer of Chinese black comedy to English-speaking audiences through this film's subtitles. The film provides a prime example of the balancing act the subtitler performs in compensating multimodally for the elements of humour which do not easily translate. *Let the Bullets Fly* is an important black comedy in China. Like *Finding Mr.* Right, discussed in Chapter 4, this film uses its genre to offer political and social commentary on China. This commentary on China is the hardest element to render in the subtitles because it is not easily transferable or relevant to an anglophone context. This chapter analyses how the subtitles treat the political and social commentary in the source material, and explores how alternative types of humour are generated for anglophone audiences through the film's subtitles.

5.2 The context of *Let the Bullets Fly* in China and anglophone countries

Let the Bullets Fly, directed by Wen Jiang (IMDb), is a Chinese black comedy which was released in China on 16th December 2010. In anglophone countries, it was first shown at an American festival (Tribeca) on 24th April 2011 (IMDb 2011). Almost a year after its original release in China, the English subtitled version was released in the US and UK. The film grossed just $63,012 at the box office in the USA (IMDb 2011). The film's lack of commercial success

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[81] As noted previously, rather than using fansubbing versions created by amateur subtitlers, this thesis works only from official DVD releases with professional subtitles. To date, the Sichuan version of *Let the Bullets Fly* has not had this type of release in English-speaking countries.

in anglophone markets can be attributed to its limited release, particularly as 8222 IMDb users have given it an average rating of 7.4 out of 10. In general, the film was also positively reviewed on its release. Lee (2011) argues that few Chinese films have this movie's level of sophistication in dialogue, plot and acting.

The film's production and distribution involved multiple media corporations. Apart from investment from Chinese state-owned film companies (China Film Group and Emei Film Group), the production benefited from the involvement of a private Hong Kong film company (Emperor Group), with its CEO, Albert Yeung, acting as co-producer (Veg 2012, p.51). This co-production serves as an example of the institutional restructuring and commercialisation of the Chinese film industry which has taken place since the start of Chinese economic market reforms in the 1990s (Kong 2007, p.232, Liu 2018, p.161). Before that decade, film production and distribution in China were entirely controlled by the state (Kong 2007, p.232). However, this state studio system gradually collapsed due to a shortage of investment (Kong 2007, p.232). The subsequent restructuring of the film industry has seen many private, non-state enterprises and foreign interests become involved in film production. More recently, the implementation of the *Regulations on Administration of Films* in 2002 has had a massive impact on Chinese film-making. The industry has transformed from a centrally planned economy to a market economy (Pan 2015, p.1).

Let the Bullets Fly is adapted from a chapter of Shitu Ma's novel *Yan Tan Shiji* (translated as *Ten Evening Talks*) (Luo 2013, p.512). Set in Ercheng (鹅城, 'Goose Town'), a fictional southwestern town, the film depicts the Warlord Era of the 1920s when China was divided and in disarray under competing warlord governments. The name Goose Town alludes to the shape of China on a map, which resembles a rooster. The pronunciation of the word for 'goose' in Chinese also has allusive and satirical implications because it sounds the same as 'starvation', which has the implication of corruption in China. The plot sees a Robin-Hood-style bandit, Pockmark Zhang (played by Wen Jiang), and his six sworn brothers ambush the new governor of Goose Town (Bangde Ma). Zhang decides to replace Ma as governor because he wants to make money from the local tyrant, Silang Huang (played by Yun-fat Chow). After Zhang's adopted son is framed by Huang and killed, Zhang pledges to avenge his death by defeating

Huang. The story closes with Huang's death and the redistribution of his money to local people as Zhang rides off into the sunset.

Let the Bullets Fly was a resounding success with Chinese audiences. One million Douban users have rated it 8.8 out of 10 (Douban Film 2010). According to China's largest online database Mtime, 44,772 viewers have rated the film 8.5 out of 10 (Mtime 2010). According to IMDb (2010), the movie was a huge box-office hit, with worldwide receipts of $104,336,887 setting a Chinese record (Landreth 2011). The film's success can be attributed to three factors: the racy script, the fame of the director,[82] and the potent black humour (Yuan Y 2015, p.97). Additionally, it follows a tried and tested production and distribution formula. The film's recognisable stars and use of the latest film-making technology also let audiences know that this is a blockbuster (Kong 2007, p.238). Finally, Lee (2011) argues that the film taps into the Chinese fascination with Western crime comedies.

Despite all this, the film was far from uncontroversial and triggered fierce debate in the Chinese tabloids and on social media. The debate revolved around revolution (Liu 2014, p.322). The release date of *Let the Bullets Fly* coincided with the 100th anniversary of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution.[83] In the film, the bandit Pockmark Zhang is a former revolutionary, a subordinate of General E Cai, a revolutionary leader of the Xinhai Revolution.[84] Zhang's antagonist Silang Huang is also a former revolutionary, who participated in the Wuchang Uprising,[85] but opportunistically works to seize the spoils of the Xinhai Revolution and take control of Goose Town. On the surface, the film is about the plucky bandit Pockmark Zhang becoming embroiled in a battle against the local despot Huang in the name of fairness and social justice. However, these two characters (Zhang and Huang) clearly reference Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek,[86] the two heirs of the Xinhai Revolution who would "fight over the future of the

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[82] Wen Jiang is a famous Chinese director and actor. As a director, he gained international fame with the films *In the Heat of the Sun* (1994) and *Devils on the Doorstep* (2000).

[83] The Xinhai Revolution aimed to overthrow the Qing dynasty (China's last imperial dynasty) and establish a Republic of China (Sotnikova 2012).

[84] E Cai successfully led the Wuchang Uprising and defeated Shikai Yuan, an advocate of feudalism in China (Mikalauskaite 2013).

[85] The Wuchang Uprising triggered the Xinhai Revolution that aimed to overthrow the Qing dynasty. This led to the formation of a Provisional Republican Government on 1st January 1912 (Oxford Reference).

[86] Mao was the leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and Chiang was the commandant of the Kuomingtang (KMT).

revolution" (Veg 2012, p.52).[87] Veg (2012, p.52) argues that the conflict *in Let the Bullets Fly* represents the fight between idealism and materialism and alludes to the battle between socialism and capitalism.

Let the Bullets Fly also engages with the reform and opening-up policies initiated in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping (Liu 2014, p.331). These reforms saw China expand its economic influence on the world stage, develop its military muscle and advance technologically (Zheng 2005, p.18). As Zheng (2005, p.18) observes, the implementation of the reform and opening-up policies led to China having one of the highest GDP growth rates in the world: an average of 9.4% per year. These reforms, though, are associated with certain negative side effects such as corruption and social injustice. Fighting corruption, Broadhurst and Peng (2014, p.157) argue, has become the primary task for China's new leaders. In 2013, President Xi Jinping emphasised the importance of anti-corruption measures at the conference of the 18th CCP Central Committee (Broadhurst and Peng 2014, pp.157-158). Zhang's victory in *Let the Bullets Fly* alludes to the anti-corruption campaign 'striking black' (or 'smashing black') and 'singing red' in China's biggest metropolis, Chongqing.[88]In 2007, under the leadership of Bo Xilai,[89] the Chongqing anti-corruption campaign started to crack down on crime, work on social stability and improve public services (Broadhurst and Peng 2014, p.160). The campaign came to national prominence as a result of its success. It led to the arrests of thousands of local officials and gangsters, an economic boom in Chongqing, and the improvement of local people's living standards (FlorCruz 2012, Broadhurst and Peng 2014, p.160). Bo's promotion of this anti-crime and anti-corruption campaign made him a hero (Broadhurst and Peng 2014, pp.157-158) before he was himself sent to prison for corruption. His dismissal was the most sensational political scandal the CCP has had to face to date (FlorCruz 2012). Corruption remains a

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[87] The CPC replaced Chiang's National Kuoming government (Republic of China) to become the ruling political party of the PRC. Prior to the establishment of the PRC, the KMT governed Mainland China between 1928 and 1949 (Britannica Nationaist Party).

[88] 'Striking black' (打黑) refers to "a ruthless, relentless crackdown on corruption and gangster activities" (FlorCruz 2012). 'Singing red' (唱红) is linked with promoting revolutionary songs to Chongqing citizens (Broadhurst and Peng 2014, p.160).

[89] Bo Xilai is a former Chinese politician. His political career ended abruptly due to the 'Lijun Wang incident'. Wang was Bo's ally in the 'striking black' campaign. In the hope of getting a promotion, Wang reported Bo's wife, Kailai Gu, to Bo for involvement in the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood. However, Bo threatened and punched Wang, who then applied for asylum at the American consulate in Chengdu, claiming both Bo and his wife were involved in Heywood's murder (Wong 2012). Bo was subsequently removed from the Politburo (FlorCruz 2012).

challenging issue for Chinese leaders.

5.3   Why *Let the Bullets Fly*?

Let the Bullets Fly is an important case study for subtitling studies because its humour is so intertwined with Chinese politics and society in ways which challenge the subtitler. It has been chosen as a result of the quality of the English subtitles, which demonstrate the subtitler's dextrous use of translation strategies to facilitate TL viewers' understanding of the plot while still making them laugh. Linguistically and culturally, the film is firmly located within the Chinese context. It is also very fast-paced and bristles with witty dialogue, wordplay, political allusions, metaphors, plot twists and different types of humour, all of which bring out the best in the subtitler. *Let the Bullets Fly* also successfully walks the thin line of China's strict censorship in its depiction of controversial and sensitive social and political issues. The Chinese censorship system has been criticised for its negative impact on China's film industry (Yang 2018b, p.163). This film is rated 15 in the UK, and the official released DVD warns that the film contains "strong language, bloody violence, and a scene of sexual violence". However, the version of *Let the Bullets Fly* released in Mainland China has no rating. According to SAPPRFT, which is responsible for censoring audiovisual products, any content that "depicts pornography, gambling, violence, or abets people to commit crimes should be banned" (Wang and Zhang 2017, p.304). Nonetheless, the film passed the censors board without cuts despite its sex and violence. This is because it cleverly employs a 'remote' strategy in its use of the historical setting of the 1920s and deploys humour to soften the ideological and social issues it touches upon. Consequently, *Let the Bullets Fly* is of key importance as a case study because it forces the subtitler to think about the multimodal balance in translating a humorous piece so rooted in Chinese political and social history for an anglophone context.

5.4   Black humour and black comedy

Black humour is central to the social and political commentary in *Let the Bullets Fly*. Black humour is defined as "Humour that has as its aim that of making fun of situations usually regarded as tragic, such as death, sickness, disability, and extreme violence, or of the people involved or subject to them" (Bucaria 2009, p.86). Liu (2018, p.158) suggests that the 'black'

elements in Chinese comedies mainly derive from illicit activities, morbidity or cruel circumstances (war), or the anxiety, suffering and despair shared by characters from the lower social class. The term 'black humour' was first used in 1940 when the French surrealist André Breton published *Anthologie de l'humour noir* (*Anthology of Black Humour*) (Bucaria 2009, p.25). The socio-economic and cultural changes in American society after World War II and during the 1960s (such as the feeling of human fragility triggered by the Vietnam War, the upsetting of the American Dream, and related fears and uncertainties about the human condition) led to clear developments in black humour as part US culture (Bucaria 2009 pp.29-47). The style remains popular to this day.

Black humour did not arrive in China until after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) had ended. The concept of black humour was first imported into China in 1976 (Wu 1992, p.45). Between 1976 and 1977, *World Literature* started to publish translations of many American works of black humour, such as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Thomas Pynchon's *V* (Wu 1992, pp.45-46). For a long time, black humour was challenging in a Chinese context because of its aim to reveal the absurdity of the world by using unconventional and disruptive themes. In many ways, this was incompatible with China's socialist political agenda during the Cultural Revolution which emphasised the centralisation of power. When the reform and opening-up policies were implemented from 1978, an increasing number of works of black humour were translated and published in China, and Chinese black humour literature developed in its own right (Hu and Li 2010 p.132). Many Chinese writers harnessed black humour to probe social problems in works such as Meng Wang's *Green Fox*, Xiaobo Wang's *Golden Times* and Xianliang Zhang's A *Romantic Black Cannon* (Wang 2012, p.103).

Jianxin Huang's *The Black Cannon Incident* (1985) is China's first major film in the black comedy genre. Its success inspired other Chinese directors to work in the same genre (Liu 2018, p.159). The political and social developments of the time in China gave directors much food for thought. The reform of state-owned enterprises led to the lay-off of many workers, a widening gap between rich and poor, and increased corruption.

A primary feature of the Chinese black comedy genre is the use of different historical and/or geographical settings as allegories for present-day China (Liu 2018, p.158). This means the

genre poses particular difficulties for subtitlers translating these films for release in a new geographical market. In this example, *Let the Bullets Fly* is firmly rooted in 1920s China. The main characters in black comedy are gangsters, crooks and people who lack socio-political power (Liu 2018, p.159). In Jiang's film, the lead character is a bandit, his ally (Counsellor Tang) is a crook, and the local townsfolk are oppressed by the tyrant Master Huang. Black comedies often challenge normalised social perceptions and practices through uneasy humour and emotional release from taboos, traumas and crises (Liu 2018, p.159). *Let the Bullets Fly* uses humour to probe sexual taboos and traumatic subjects. Three themes have been identified in black comedy: "man as beast, the absurdity of the world, and the omnipresence of death" (Bucaria 2009, p.55). The second theme of absurdity is strongly relevant to this film. Bucaria points out that "The absurdity of the world underlines the dangerous randomness of life, the realisation of an unordered universe and of the flaws of mortal man" (2009 p.48). Examples of absurdity in the film include Counsellor Tang's eight-year-old son actually being an adult (Figure 5.1), and Pockmark Zhang's adopted son Six's gravestone being a huge wooden hand making a gesture that symbolises 'Six' (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.1 Author's screenshot depicting Counsellor Tang's eight-year-old son (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Figure 5.2 Author's screenshot depicting the character Six's gravestone (Let the bullets fly 2011).

The black comedy genre is now well established in China as a result of films such as *Big Shot's Funeral*, *The Crazy Stone* and *Let the Bullets Fly*. Such has been the impact of *Let the Bullets Fly* that, according to Liu, 'let the bullets fly' has become a widespread catchphrase in China. It can be adapted to different contexts, and reminds Chinese audiences to think about their daily life due to the metaphorical meaning of 'fly' (Liu 2014, p.333). Spin-off popular phrases have even developed from it, such as 'let the oil price fly' and 'let the real estate price fly' (Liu 2014, p.333).

5.5 Types of humour in *Let the Bullets Fly*

Black comedy, like romantic comedy, chick flicks and martial arts comedy, is built on the complex interconnections between a variety of types of humour. *Let the Bullets Fly* illustrates this well, with four different types of humour from the film examined in this chapter: cultural humour, VEH, and heterogeneous complex humour. The examples that follow highlight the interactions between these humour types and their transfer to English-speaking audiences through an intriguing subtitling process.

5.5.1 Chinese cultural humour

Humour in the following example is triggered by cultural references which are tricky for the subtitler to navigate.

Example

Example background
In a key battle, Master Huang uses historical allusion to talk strategy.

Chinese lines (subtitles)
黄老爷：出车！我要你看看，什么叫做草船借箭。

胡千：老爷，咱们放的是马，不是船。

黄老爷：你个傻瓜，这叫比喻！比喻！比喻！比喻！

胡千：不就是赤壁嘛！

Translation of Chinese subtitles
Master Huang: Send the carriages! I will show you what is 'borrow arrows with straw boats'.

Hu Qian: Master, we are sending horses, not boats.

Master Huang: You idiot! This is called a metaphor! A metaphor! Metaphor! Metaphor!

Hu Qian: Is this not the red cliff (*Chi Bi*)?

English subtitles

Master Huang: Send the carriages! I'll show you how to 'borrow arrows with a straw boat'.

Hu Qian: Master, we are sending horses, not boats.

Master Huang: You idiot! This is called a metaphor! A metaphor! Metaphor! Metaphor!

Hu Qian: The battle of Red Cliff?

Screenshots

Figure 5.3 Author's screenshot depicting Master Huang looking pleased (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Figure 5.4 Author's screenshot depicting Master Huang feeling anger (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Analysis

The humour in both the Chinese lines and subtitles is provoked by the idiomatic expression "borrow arrows with a straw boat" (草船借箭). Specifically, laughter is kindled by Master Huang's subordinate failing to understand the idiom as a metaphor and even having the courage to query the validity of his boss's statement. Humour is primarily communicated in the verbal mode, with facial expressions and kinesic actions as complementary modes to reinforce it. The Chinese idiom "borrow arrows with a straw boat" (草船借箭) or 'borrowing arrows with thatched boats' literally means 'straw boats borrow arrows', which originates from the Chinese classic *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.[90] The phrase "borrow arrows with a straw boat" refers to a battle in the era of the Three Kingdoms,[91] when Liang Zhuge, the military strategist for the state of Shu Han, was required to obtain 100,000 arrows in ten days or be sentenced to death. Zhuge prepared straw men and boats and sent his soldiers to

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[90] *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Guanzhong Luo is one of four classical Chinese novels. It is an epic story of war during the Han dynasty (Penguin Classics).
[91] "Three Kingdoms, Chinese (Pinyin) *Sanguo*, (AD 220-280), trio of warring Chinese states that followed the demise of the Han Dynasty (206 BC- AD 220)" (*Britannica*).

stage a fake attack on Cao Cao's troops. Because of heavy fog on the river, the enemy soldiers failed to distinguish between the real soldiers and fake ones. Thus they shot arrows into the straw men, which Zhuge's troops could then collect. Liang Zhuge succeeded in his seemingly impossible task thanks to his clever strategy. The resulting expression is used to refer to achieving one's goal by wisely making use of another's manpower or financial resources.

In *Let the Bullets Fly*, Master Huang's strategy is to send carriages to collect the money that Pockmark Zhang is giving to the townspeople. He uses the historical allusion as a metaphor to underline what he sees as his own cunning as well as his erudition with ancient Chinese history. When he explains his plan, he fans himself complacently, sure he will succeed (Figure 5.3). However, his subordinate completely misunderstands the allusion and seeks to correct him: "Master, we are sending horses, not boats." Huang bristles with anger and reprimands his lieutenant as an idiot. After Master Huang's vituperative outburst, his subordinate is unfazed, calmly asking "Is this not the red cliff?" to confirm that he is aware of the historical allusion[92] and is far from being an idiot.

Humour is generated from Huang's repetition of the word "metaphor": "You idiot! This is called a metaphor! A metaphor! Metaphor! Metaphor!" "Repetition or replay of the same situation" (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.154) is a common humour technique in audiovisual texts. The repeated word "metaphor" is a rhetorical device in its own right. It attracts the audience's attention and directs them to consider the metaphor "borrow arrows with a straw boat". The repetition underlines that Master Huang's superiority is far from secure, and there is humour in the fact that he directs his aggression at his own henchman, rather than the forces they are both seeking to defeat. Chang (1997, p.107) states "People tend to use indirection as a hypocritical attempt to camouflage the aggression in verbal humour". The screenshot in Figure 5.4 shows the ugly, twisted expression on Huang's face. The sharp contrast with his previous expression in Figure 5.3 creates a comic effect. The humour in this exchange is largely verbal, but other supplementary modes contribute: facial expressions,

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[92] The Battle of Red Cliffs marked the end of the Chinese Han dynasty, and the establishment of the Three Kingdoms. The site is now part of the city of Chibi (Red Cliff) in Hubei Province. The city is usually translated as Red Cliff (singular), while the battle is known as the Battle of Red Cliffs (plural). The Battle of Red Cliffs is a famous moment in Chinese history because the alliance of Shu state and Wu state defeated the powerful Wei state's troops despite their forces being inferior in number.

paralinguistic behaviour including tone (a sharp rise in the volume of his voice) and kinesic actions (Master Huang hits his subordinate with the fan).

Confronted with rendering the Chinese idiomatic humour in the phrase "borrow arrows with straw boats" in the English subtitles, the subtitler applies the strategy of literal translation to achieve a formal equivalence. Nida suggests that formal equivalence takes both form and content into account, and that the TL should "match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language" (1964, p.159). However, in some cases, literal translation strategy can lead to misunderstanding, ambiguity or absurdity. Humour in the Chinese original is generated by the implied meaning of the idiom, and it is highly likely that the English-speaking audience is not familiar with the idiom and cannot comprehend it as a metaphor. Consequently, the subtitler adds single quotation marks to the Chinese idiom to draw the target audience's attention to it. The fourfold repetition of the word "metaphor" ensures the English-speaking audience can grasp that the Chinese idiom is a metaphor even if they do not understand the metaphor itself. However, the social commentary and history evoked in the scene are inevitably lost. The humour ceases to be satirical (related to Chinese history) and instead becomes human – triggered by the incomprehension of the subordinate character. Working together with the visual modes, including the facial expressions and kinesic actions, the English subtitles offer a different type of humour to the English-speaking audience. The Chinese audience appreciate the humour in the original scene based on their familiarity with the idiom as a cultural reference.

This exemplifies how the translation of cultural humour poses a particular challenge for the subtitler. Unlike in other types of translation, the temporal and spatial constraints of subtitling make it impossible to explain the cultural humour in a footnote. In this case, the subtitler applies the translation strategy of formal equivalence to maintain the same form and meaning as the SL, and adds the single quotation marks. The employment of the punctuation marks is not only a device to draw the audience's attention to the phrase. Intriguingly, this strategy also makes the anglophone audience aware that comprehension of this quotation relies on knowledge which they do not have. As a result, the SL and TL audiences appreciate the scene for different reasons. Armed with the requisite historical knowledge, the SL audience understand it as cultural humour. As the cultural idiom does not exist in the English language,

the English audience can appreciate the humour thanks to the contextual information provided, but without understanding the meaning of the metaphor. Additionally, the subtitles' interaction with the various modalities on-screen, such as facial expressions and kinesic actions, ensures humour is realised in the English subtitled version, albeit differently from the Chinese original.

5.5.2 Verbally expressed humour (wordplay and code-switching humour)

Wordplay is a particularly difficult form of humour for subtitlers to render, and plays on words occur in important scenes in *Let the Bullets Fly*. There is extensive scholarly work on the forms wordplay can take: "Besides punning, wordplay humour uses devices like parody, anagram, spoonerism and transformed allusion" (Low 2011, p.62). However, the example of wordplay examined in this section uses a specific Chinese form called *Biezi Fa*[93] (which literally means 'miswritten words'). This is an important addition to Low's classification of wordplay humour types.

Example

Example background

Master Huang has invited Governor Zhang and his counsellor, Tang, to have dinner at his fortress. Master Huang's real intention is to murder them. He explains how the two big families in Goose Town make money.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

黄老爷：我们鹅城有两大家族，都是把人卖到 America,修铁路，挣的都是 dollar。

汤师爷：还说<u>刀</u>的事儿。

黄老爷：No, no, no, dollar, 美国人用的钱。Dollar, you know?

汤师爷：dollar, <u>到</u>了，黄老爷一<u>来</u>，钱就<u>到</u>了。

Translation of the Chinese subtitles

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[93] *Biezi Fa* is a wordplay humour device in Chinese (Yang 2007, p.44).

Master Huang: There are two big families in Goose Town. They sell labour to build railways in America. All they earn are <u>US dollars</u>.

Counsellor Tang: You are talking about <u>knife</u> again?

Master Huang: No, no, no, dollar. Dollar is the money that Americans use. Dollar! You know?

Counsellor Tang: Dollar <u>arrives.</u> As long as Master Huang <u>appears</u>, money <u>arrives</u>!

English subtitles

Master Huang: There are two big families in Goose Town. They got rich selling labour to build railways in America. What they earn are US dollars.

Counsellor Tang: Why are you talking about <u>dolls</u>?

Master Huang: No, dollar, what Americans call their money. Dollar! You know?

Counsellor Tang: <u>Dollar</u>, sounds like <u>'follow'</u>. Where Master Huang goes, money <u>follows</u>!

Analysis

The film's Chinese dialogue and subtitles contain English words and expressions. Chinese audiences can be assumed to understand English at a basic level. Humour in this example is primarily delivered via the acoustic channel. Code-switching between Chinese and English gives rise to incongruity, which provokes humour. The seemingly incongruous code-switching when talking about money also serves as an allusion to the fact that Master Huang has experienced the world beyond China. The film is set in the 1920s, approximately ten years after the Xinhai Revolution, prior to which the Qing government had encouraged students to study abroad to save the nation. In this historical context, Master Huang's knowledge of English is important and political. The code-switching from Chinese to English is humorous in itself to the Chinese audience who have a basic knowledge of English. Humour is triggered in different ways for Chinese audiences who do not know English. Humour for these audiences comes from "Repetition or replay of the same situation" (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.154), one of the humour techniques typically found in audiovisual media. Huang's repeated use of the word 'dollar' thus becomes a humorous element. The original humour in the Chinese dialogue is lost in the English subtitles because it relies on the code-switching between Chinese and English. This humour can only be fully appreciated by speakers of Chinese. The loss of humour in the English subtitles is a consequence of the linguistic flattening of the

original multilingual dialogue to make it comprehensible to audiences who do not speak Chinese.

Comic effect in the wordplay of the original Chinese is achieved through sound play in the form of alliteration, assonance and consonance. In the Chinese dialogue and subtitles, this focuses particularly on similarities between the words for 'dollar' (in Chinese, '美元' or '美金', Pinyin *měiyuán* or *měijīn*), 'knife' (in Chinese, '刀' Pinyin *dāo*) and 'arrive' (in Chinese, '到' Pinyin *dào*). Confusion over the different meanings associated with these sounds triggers humour. Counsellor Tang is unable to understand English, and phonetically, the English pronunciation of "dollar" is similar to that of the Chinese word for "knife". Master Huang's sudden code-switching from Chinese to English when talking about US dollars misleads Tang into thinking that Huang is talking about a knife. In fact, as a result of the words' similar pronunciations, the term 'US knife' is used colloquially to mean 'US dollar' in Chinese. In the process of explaining to the counsellor that "dollar" is what American people call their money, the counsellor is suddenly enlightened by Master Huang's hand gesture (he snaps his fingers). The kinesic action reinforces the verbal mode (Huang's utterance). To flatter Master Huang, the counsellor associates "dollar" ("knife") with "arrive", also based on their similar Chinese pronunciation: *dāo* ("dollar") and *dào* ("arrive"). The only difference in the pronunciation of two words lies in the tone. The former is the first or flat tone, and the latter is the fourth or falling tone. Tones are used in Mandarin to differentiate written characters that should be pronounced differently. After Counsellor Tang utters "Where Master Huang goes, money follows", both the governor and the counsellor laugh. Olsson points out that "Laughter [can] be used as a weapon against a common foe. We laugh at what we are most anxious or uneasy about" (2001, p.25). Considering that the real purpose of Master Huang's banquet is to murder the two men, their sudden burst of laughter could certainly be associated with unease. According to the relief theory of humour, "laughter is the venting of excess nervous energy" (Morreall 1987, p.6). Kress and Leeuwen argue that "Meanings are realised through more than one semiotic code" (2006, p.177). This scene illustrates their point as it is the interplay of the verbal mode (wordplay) and non-verbal mode (facial expressions and kinesic actions) that triggers laughter.

Unable to retain the play on the word "knife" from the Chinese original, the English subtitles attempts to replicate the VEH in English via a play on the words "dolls" and "dollars". In Chinese, this humour technique is called *Biezi Fa*: "A word or phrase that is miswritten or mispronounced as another word or phrase, intentionally or unintentionally, to generate humour. Similarly, if the word is a polyphone, the different meaning of this word can also create humour" (Yang 2007, p.44). "Dollars" and "dolls" are phonetically similar, and it is plausible that the counsellor could fail to catch Huang's remark and make an auditory mistake. The translator therefore makes an effort to reproduce the source humour, choosing a phonetically similar word in English ("follow") and linking it explicitly to the original prompt "dollar": "Dollar, sounds like 'follow'". In translating the wordplay between "dollar" and "follow", the subtitler applies the strategy of interpretative translation. This strategy requires the translator to have relevant knowledge of the SL and source culture, and be capable of translating this into the TL simply and concisely (Du et al. 2013, pp.258-259). In this case, the translation successfully transposes the humorous element into the English subtitles and achieves dynamic equivalence for the English-speaking audience.

This example highlights that it is hard to transfer phonetic humour from Chinese, but also that it is possible. Humour is still realised in the English subtitles. The code-switching humour is lost, but wordplay humour is recreated by means that are directly equivalent. This shows that applying interpretative translation as a strategy for translating Chinese into English can successfully transfer humour from the SL to the TL.

5.5.3 Heterogeneous complex humour

The examples in this section represent combinations of different types of humour. They all come under the category of heterogeneous complex humour because, within each example, the different humour types are semantically connected and cannot be considered separately. The humour would be diminished if the context were removed. As Nash (1985, p.23) argues, humour does not work in isolation; instead, humour is generated by interactions between contextual information and linguistic elements.

Example 1 Chinese cultural humour and code-switching humour

Example background

After the governor and the counsellor leave Huang's house, Huang tells his subordinate to kill the governor and get his diamonds back.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

黄老爷：今晚，<u>杀鸡取卵</u>！一定要在县长的床上，不要让人以为吃了我的饭，死在我家里，死在半路上。

胡万：明白！

黄老爷：哪个是鸡？

胡万：县长！

黄老爷：那么卵呢？

胡万：是不是把县长给煽了？

黄老爷：<u>钻石</u>！<u>钻石</u>！我的<u>两颗钻石</u>！

胡万：老爷放心！你要的钻石，我这就给你弄回来！

黄老爷：<u>I'm sorry!</u>

胡万：<u>My pleasure, Sir.</u>

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Master Huang: Tonight, we must<u> kill the chicken and take the ova/eggs</u>. Do it in the governor's own bed? Don't let people think he had dinner with me and then died at my home, died on the way heading to his own house.

Wan Hu: Understood!

Master Huang: Who is the chicken?

Wan Hu: The governor.

Master Huang: And the eggs?

Wan Hu: You want us to castrate him?

Master Huang: The <u>diamonds</u>! The <u>diamonds</u>! My two <u>diamonds</u>!

Wan Hu: Master, rest your heart. I will get your diamonds back immediately!

Master Huang: <u>I'm sorry.</u>

Wan Hu: <u>My pleasure, sir.</u>

English subtitles

Master Huang: Tonight, we shall <u>kill the chicken and take the eggs.</u> Do it in his own bed. Don't let people think he dined with me-then died because of me.

Wan Hu: Understood!

Master Huang: Who is the chicken?

Wan Hu: The governor.

Master Huang: And the eggs?

Wan Hu: You want us to castrate him?

Master Huang: The <u>diamonds</u>! My two <u>diamonds</u>!

Wan Hu: Master, rest assured, your diamonds will be returned in no time!

Master Huang: <u>I'm sorry.</u>

Wan Hu: <u>My pleasure, sir.</u>

Screenshots

Figure 5.5 Author's screenshot depicting Master Huang looking deadpan (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Figure 5.6 Author's screenshot depicting Master Huang's twisted and angry facial expressions (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Analysis

In the Chinese original, the humour has various sources: Chinese cultural humour and code-switching humour. From a verbal perspective, the idiomatic and colloquial expression "kill the chicken and take the eggs" (杀鸡取卵) has a roughly equivalent expression in English: 'kill the goose that lays the golden eggs'. The Chinese expression literally means that to kill the chicken and take the ova. The figurative meaning of this phrase refers to the type of person who

sacrifices long-term gains for short-term benefits (*Set-Phrase Dictionary*). The humour, at the verbal level, is engendered by the technique of conceptual surprise: "Misleading the audience by means of a sudden unexpected change of concept" (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.153). Specifically, a synonym for 'egg' is 'ovum', which represents the female reproductive's cell. Humour then stems from the fact that the subordinate believes Huang's is using this word to refer to male genitals and wants him to kill and castrate the governor as revenge. The exasperated Huang clarifies in exasperation that he means the diamonds. This confusion offers a conceptual surprise, which confounds the audience's expectations and in so doing generates humour. In the Chinese dialogue, the repetition of "diamonds" also creates humour. This is weakened in the process of translation into English because the subtitler reduces and lessens the reference: "The diamonds! My two diamonds!" The humorous effect is reinforced paralinguistically and by the interplay of different modes. Master Huang asks his subordinate "Who is the chicken?" with a deadpan expression (Figure 5.7). This contrasts sharply with his subsequent facial expression (Figure 5.8), which reveals his fury at his subordinate's mistake. Huang's shift in vocal tone emphasises the humour as well. In a calm, level voice, he asks "Who is the chicken?" When he speaks of the diamonds, his louder, harsher voice also reflects his fury. Huang's facial expressions and vocal tones work together to intensify the verbal humour.

When rendering the Chinese idiomatic expression in this example into English, the subtitler applies a strategy of word-for-word translation, in which the translation in the TL "adheres closely to source-language syntax" (Munday 2012, p.32). This strategy not only retains the literal meaning of the Chinese colloquial expression, but also transforms it into a pun. The word 'egg' not only refers to the food laid by a chicken, it also means "a cell produced by a woman or female animal from which a baby can develop if it combines with a male sex cell" (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'egg'). The English translation has the same effect as the original Chinese dialogue, and provides an opportunity for the English-speaking audience to reach the Chinese text. As humour depends on the literal meaning of this idiomatic expression, and its figurative meaning does not contribute to the realisation of humour, the subtitler's approach to render it literally is highly appropriate. This shows that cultural humour in black comedy, or indeed other genres, can be understood in translation if sufficient contextual information is provided.

Another comic effect in the Chinese original (both the dialogue and subtitles) arises as a result of the code-switching from Chinese to English when Master Huang apologises for losing his temper and his rude behaviour. As English language is a compulsory subject in education in China and the dialogue in this scene is straightforward, it may be presumed that a majority of the Chinese audience are capable of understanding this exchange. After his henchman Wan Hu commits to getting the diamonds back, Master Huang feels relieved and says in English "I'm sorry'' as an unprompted apology for his remarks. Unexpectedly and comically, Master Huang's subordinate replies to him in English. Master Huang has scolded and humiliated Wan Hu in front of all his subordinates and hurt Hu's self-esteem. Hu's response in English underscores his education and standing. Hu's response is a highly ironic one because working for Huang is anything but pleasurable. In this context, irony refers to "saying one thing and meaning something else or exactly the opposite of what you are saying" (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.153). While the other aspect of the code-switching humour is entirely lost in the English subtitles, the ironic meaning of the English dialogue ensures some humour is retained in the subtitled version.

To summarise, the Chinese cultural humour of the original is preserved to some extent in the English subtitles as a result of largely equivalent idiomatic expressions but also because of the interplay of facial expressions and paralinguistic behaviour. The code-switching humour associated with the scene's English dialogue is lost as a result of the linguistic flattening of the multilingual dialogue in the subtitles. However, the irony in "My pleasure, sir" can still lead to a humorous effect for the English-speaking audience.

Example 2 Verbal humour and non-verbal humour (visual humour)

Example background
To bring justice to Goose Town, Pockmark Zhang impersonates the governor and punishes Master Huang's fight advisor Champion Wu (Juren Wu).[94] This action wins him the respect of

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[94] Juren refers to the candidate who successfully passes the examination in the imperial examinations at the provincial level in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

the town. To celebrate, Zhang plays a tune by Mozart for his adopted son Six in the governor's room.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

六子: 这是谁吹的？

张麻子:听着像穆扎。他们那边儿叫穆扎，咱们这边儿叫穆扎特。

六子：你还能听出来是谁吹的呢？

张麻子:得分时候。

六子：什么时候？

张麻子： 那上面儿印着他名字的时候。

Translation of Chinese lines and Chinese subtitles[95]

Six: Who played this music?

Zhang: Sounds like Mu Zha. They call him Mu Zha, but we call him Mu Zha Te. (Translation of the Chinese dialogue)

Zhang: Sounds like Mu Zha. They call him Mu Zha, but we call him Mo Zha Te. (Translation of the Chinese subtitle)

Six: You can distinguish who played the music?

Zhang: It depends.

Six: When?

Zhang: When his name is printed on that.

English subtitles

Six: Who made this music?

Zhang: Sounds like Mu Zha. People call him Mu Zha, but we call him Mu Zha Te.

Six: Wow, you can tell who this is?

Zhang: Sometimes.

Six: When?

Zhang: When his name is on the cover.

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[95] The translation of the Chinese dialogue is the same as the Chinese subtitles, except for Mozart's name.

Analysis

Two differences can be observed in comparing the Chinese lines with the Chinese subtitles. One is that the rhotacisation (*Erhua*) is omitted in the Chinese subtitles but remains in the Chinese lines. This feature "sounds smooth and mellow, and engenders a feeling of warmth and intimacy" (Zhang 2008, p.210). The purpose of the massive repetition of the rhotacisation in the Chinese dialogue is to generate a humorous effect. The reason for its omission from the subtitle is clear. Rhotacisation is specific to spoken language and is seldom used in written texts. As Zhang puts it, "rhotacisation occurs most often in casual speech and with nouns" (2008, p.210). It only generates humour in the spoken text (the Chinese dialogue). Another difference between the Chinese dialogue and the Chinese subtitles is the way the name 'Mozart' is transcribed. The first part is pronounced "Mu" in the Chinese dialogue but given as "Mo" in the corresponding subtitle.[96]

Humour is triggered by Six's questions and Zhang's answers in the Chinese dialogue and the subtitles. Based on Zhang's comments, Six believes that his father is knowledgeable because he is capable of distinguishing Mozart's works.[97] However, Zhang's final utterance reveals that he is lying to his son because he does not have a clue about the musician at all and has merely read his name. Specifically, in response to Six's inquiry "Who made the music?", Zhang replies with a hesitant remark "Sounds like Mu Zha", which soon clashes with his assured and seemingly authoritative declaration that "They call him Mu Zha, but we call him Mu Zha Te." The relatively hesitant utterance "Sounds like Mu Zha" is in sharp contrast with his subsequent fast statement "People call him Mu Zha". Zhang's fast speaking further highlights the contrast between the verbal mode (Zhang's speedy utterance) and the acoustic mode (slow background music), creating a comic effect. According to Buijzen and Valkenberg (2004, p.154) argue, this is a key audiovisual humour technique. Six says "Wow, you can tell who this is?" and Zhang's reply "Sometimes" arouses Six's curiosity. It is not until Zhang informs Six that he

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[96]The reason is that the Chinese sound equivalent of Mozart is "Mo Zha Te", which has become the norm when referring to Mozart. The English subtitle is clearly translated based on the Chinese dialogue rather than the Chinese subtitle because it uses "Mu" in the subtitles "Sounds like Mu Zha" and "People call him Mu Zha, but we call him Mu Zha Te".

[97]The background music is an excerpt from the second movement (adagio) of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto: KV622. This last work by Mozart is one of his most famous compositions. The adagio is a slow and moving piece in which the composer expresses his inner loneliness (Favorite Classical Composers, no date). It foreshadows Six's tragic death shortly after the scene.

can only tell that Mozart wrote the music "When his name is on the cover" that both burst into laughter. Six finally realises that his father has just played a joke on him. Their facial expressions, the background music and the kinesic actions together create the humorous effect.

The subtitler employs humorous foreignisation to retain the Chinese name "Mu Zha" rather than the English version of the name Mozart in the English subtitle as "Sounds like Mu Zha."[98] Moreover, despite the fact that the maintenance of the Chinese sound translation of 'Mozart' prevents explicit communication of the meaning of the English subtitle "Sounds like Mu Zha" to the English-speaking audience, they are likely to realise that "Mu Zha" is Mozart from the music itself and thus understand the English subtitle. The English subtitles combined with the music allow anglophone viewers to laugh at the characters' failure to recognise the musical giant that is Mozart. The interplay of different modes in the visual and acoustic channels contributes to the meaning of the subtitles. This example shows that humour in the English subtitles is delivered differently from its Chinese source but is nevertheless delivered effectively.

Example 3 Acoustic humour (sound) + verbal humour

Acoustic humour (sound) is defined as humour generated by auditory means. This type of humour is recognised and appreciated in the acoustic channel. This example falls into the category of heterogeneous complex humour and shows the power of the integration of modes in generating humour. Here, the unfolding of the acoustic humour depends on the coexistence of two modes. On the surface, humour in this case is generated in the acoustic channel by whistles. In reality, however, it is only in conjunction with the visual channel in the form of subtitles (verbal modes). This is because the sound of the whistle needs to be decoded in the verbal form for understanding.

Example background

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[98] Foreignisation or resistant translation is a translation strategy proposed by Venuti who states that "Foreignizing translation seeks to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation. Foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations" (Venuti 1994, p.20).

The bandits blow whistles to pass messages to each other during a battle with their enemies.

Chinese subtitles

老五：[老七去找老三，干掉西面]

老七：[我到了]

老三：[不是七个，是十一个]

老七：[没事，你四，我七]

老三：[落停。]

老五：老三来信，西边搞定。

汤师爷：这鸡叫成电台了，我看行。

…

汤师爷：[大哥死了，大哥死了。]

老三：大哥死了？

老七：你把大哥给吹死了。

老三：老五，你去看看。

老五：大哥。大哥。大哥，他们说你死了。

张麻子：放他妈的屁！我这不还活着吗？

老五：[大哥没死]

张麻子：放他妈的屁怎么没吹啊？

老五：[放你妈的屁]

老七：听见没，骂咱们放你娘的屁呢！等会儿，（他们说假的麻子抓到了。）

Translation of Chinese subtitles

E5: Brother Seven, go to Brother Three and deal with the west.

D4: I'm here.

C3: Not ten, but eleven.

G7: Not a problem. You four, me seven.

C3: All stopped!

E5: Message from Brother Three, the west is done.

Counsellor: The cock crows are like broadcasting station. That sounds OK by me.

…

The counsellor: (Big brother is dead! Big brother is dead!)

D4: (Big brother is dead!)

C3: Big brother has died?

G7: You blew the big brother to death.

C3: Five, go have a look.

E5: Big brother! Big brother! They said you were dead!

A1: Bullshit! Can you see that I am still alive?

E5: (Big brother isn't dead.)

A1: Why don't you whistle bullshit?

E5: (Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!)

G7: Hear that? They are saying we are bullshit! Wait a second. (They said that they got the fake Pockmark.)

English subtitles

E5: (G7, go to C3 and deal with the west.)

D4: (I'm here.)

C3: (Not ten, but eleven.)

G7: (Not a problem. You four, me seven.)

C3: (All done!)

E5: Message from C3, the west is secured.

Counsellor: These pleasant calls are like telegrams, brilliant!

…

The counsellor: (A1 is dead!)

D4: (A1 is dead!)

C3: Big brother has died?

G7: You just told them A1 is dead.

C3: E5, go take a look.

E5: A1! A1! They said you were dead!

A1: Bullshit! Can't you see I'm alive?

E5: (A1 is alive.)

A1: You neglected to whistle Bullshit.

E5: (Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!)

G7: Hear that? They are saying we're full of shit! Wait a second. (They've got the fake Pockmark Zhang.)

Screenshots

Figure 5.7 Author's screenshot depicting the character

Pockmark Zhang frowning at his brother (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Figure 5.8 Author's screenshot depicting the character Counsellor Tang looking scared (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Analysis

The bandits use whistles to deliver messages in code. In both the English and Chinese subtitles, the meaning of the coded whistle sounds is given in brackets to differentiate this from the dialogue. The code depends on the whistles (sound) being correctly converted to text (in this

case, the subtitles: the verbal mode). It is interesting to note that the action within this scene involves complex translation that includes processes ranging from intersemiotic translation to interlingual translation in a film which is itself translated in similar ways. Humour is generated specifically by the fact that the characters in the scene misconvert the sounds into text. They get it continually and comically wrong, producing nonsensical messages. Acoustic humour also springs from a misunderstanding. Counsellor Tang whistles at random with no knowledge of the code. This is misinterpreted as a message that Pockmark Zhang is dead. In the process of clearing up this misunderstanding, humour results from the interplay of verbal and non-verbal modes. The background music to the scene that echoes the whistles of the code is a parody of the *Colonel Bogey March*. It is a British march which was composed in 1914 by Frederick Joseph Ricketts (Kelley 2012, p.205). Its melody is widely used for humorous purposes and often given comical folk lyrics due to its rhythmic structure and the cheerful two-tone introductory figure (Kelley 2012, p.206). Humour in the verbal mode is provoked by the swear word "bullshit" and its constant repetition. Figure 5.6 shows Counsellor Tang looking surprised and scared. Pockmark Zhang's face darkens with an angry frown when his comrades inform him of his own death (Figure 5.5). The humour is intensified by this striking contrast in facial expressions in the visual channel.

The subtitling of this acoustic humour into English is straightforward. The semantic content is meaningfully transferred by adopting simplification and merging strategies. The subtitles themselves indicate the potential humour in this scene because the intersemiotic translation of the whistle sounds into the verbal mode (Chinese and English subtitles) is in brackets to differentiate it from the film's dialogue. The acoustic humour is retained in the TL due to the combined effect of different modes, among which the verbal mode (subtitles) is indispensable. While the humour may ultimately stem from the non-verbal whistles, it is closely connected with the verbal mode. Both modes work in harmony.

The acoustic humour in this example is a special case of heterogenous complex humour. Humour relies on the coexistence of the verbal modes and non-verbal modes, which cannot be considered in isolation when analysing comedy.

Example 4 VEH and non-verbal humour (visual humour)

Example background

Master Huang sends his subordinate to investigate whether Pockmark Zhang is the real governor of Goose Town. Having found out the truth, Huang visits the governor's court.

Chinese lines (subtitles)[99]

黄老爷：这照片是你吗？

张麻子：是我。

黄老爷：是吗？

张麻子：是。那时候我还很瘦。

黄老爷：这就不是你。

张麻子：你说他不是我？

黄老爷：不是！

张麻子：我说他也不是我。这根本就<u>他妈</u>不是我！(Chinese line)

张麻子：我说他也不是我。这根本就不是我！(Chinese subtitle)

黄老爷：那到底是怎么回事？

张麻子：我还想知道知道是怎么<u>回事儿</u>呢！(回事)

Translation of Chinese lines and subtitles

Master Huang: Is that you in the picture?

Pockmark Zhang: Yes, it is me.

Master Huang: Really?

Pockmark Zhang: Yes. I was much slimmer at that time.

Master Huang: This is not you.

Pockmark Zhang: You say he is not me?

Master Huang: No.

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[99] The difference between the Chinese lines and the subtitles lies in the last line. To save space, the two versions are here reproduced next to each other with labels, and the difference is underlined.

Pockmark Zhang: I say he is not me. This is absolutely not <u>fucking (his mother)</u> me! (translation of Chinese line)

Pockmark Zhang: I say he is not me. This is absolutely not me! (translation of Chinese subtitle)

Master Huang: What on earth is going on then?

Pockmark Zhang: I would also love to know what has happened.

English subtitles

Master Huang: Is that you in the picture?

Pockmark Zhang: Yes, it is.

Master Huang: Really?

Pockmark Zhang: Yes. I was much slimmer then.

Master Huang: I don't think that's you.

Pockmark Zhang: You say that's not me?

Master Huang: Nope.

Pockmark Zhang: I don't think that's me either. That's definitely not me!

Master Huang: What's going on then?

Pockmark Zhang: I would also love to know!

Screenshots

Figure 5.9 Author's screenshot depicting the real and fake governor (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Analysis

The Chinese dialogue and the Chinese subtitles are different. In the Chinese dialogue, Pockmark Zhang expresses his anger via a swear word: "This is absolutely not fucking (his mother) me". His swear word is removed in the Chinese subtitles. This is because, according

to SAPPRFT's Administrative Regulations on Domestic Film Subtitles, a film's subtitles must use standard Chinese characters and strictly comply with all relevant laws and regulations. The swearing in this line violates these regulations so it is omitted from the Chinese subtitles.

Master Huang has investigated the governor's identity and brings a photo of the real governor. As the picture (Figure 5.9) shows, the real governor is Counsellor Tang and not Pockmark Zhang. At the beginning of the scene, the real governor's face and Pockmark Zhang's face are shown in close-up. These shots enable the audience to identify the real governor. The close-up of Pockmark Zhang also reveals how calm he is, when he might be expected to be frightened in the face of this proof of his deception. Master Huang asks Zhang "Is that you in the picture?" even though he already knows that it is not. The exchange that follows is an example of the film's black humour, which "relies for its comic effect on absurdity" (Nilsen and Nilsen 2000, p.46). Zhang's response "Yes, it is" is entirely devoid of logic because the evidence contradicts him. This illogical game and dialogue are a technique to create humour in this Chinese black comedy. Humour arises from co-deployment of the visual image (pictures) and the dialogue between Master Huang and Zhang. To remove the visual mode would make the dialogue completely non-humorous. When Zhang claims that he was slimmer when the photo was taken, it is comic because there is no discernible difference in the weight of the men. In view of Zhang's lie, Master Huang drops any pretence and says "I don't think that's you." With comic speed, Zhang immediately confirms what Huang says, using a profanity in the process: "This is absolutely not fucking (his mother) me". The camera moves to focus on the confused face of Master Huang, and we share his confusion at Zhang's abrupt volte-face. Zhang's reaction as he argues both sides of the possible truth confounds the audience's expectations and defies logic. This reflects the unconventional structures of black humour.

The English subtitles also omit the swear word, but they remain humorous as a result of the speed and vehemence with which Zhang argues the opposite of what he asserted to be absolutely true in the sentence immediately before. The translation of visual humour is retained in the English subtitles because humour is generated through Master Huang's perplexed facial expression at Zhang's U-turn. The translator applies a free translation strategy to translate the Chinese original into English. With humour predominantly transferred

through the visual mode in this scene, the verbal mode works to reinforce it in complementary ways.

Example 5 Dialect humour and surreal humour

This example shows the intricate ways in which this film generates humour from the use of the Northern dialect (as a form of VEH) and surreal humour (as a form of non-verbal humour). The combination of different modes intensifies the humorous effect, making this a case of heterogenous complex humour (see Figure 7.1). The composite nature of this example of humour involving different modes requires an equally composite approach to subtitling.

Example background

After the murder of Six by Huang, Pockmark Zhang and the other bandits vow to avenge him.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

老四：六弟，四哥发誓替你报仇！

老无：六弟，五哥发誓替你报仇！

老七：六哥，七弟发誓替你报仇！二哥喝醉了，他让我带<u>话儿</u>，二哥发誓替你报仇！

老三：六弟，三哥发誓替你报仇！二哥没喝醉，他生气了！大哥不想让<u>大伙儿</u>拼命。命都不拼还算麻匪吗？大哥不应该听他的，姓汤的不是个好<u>玩意儿</u>。

汤师爷：六爷，黄四郎这<u>招儿</u>叫杀人不用刀，我给你爹出的<u>招儿</u>叫杀人诛心。不能拼命啊，拼命还怎么挣钱呐？

张麻子：六子，挣钱对咱算个<u>事儿</u>吗？我不是要杀人诛心，是没想出好办法，我要把黄四郎连<u>根儿</u>都拔掉，给我<u>点儿</u>时间。六子，爹发誓一定给你报仇！把脸收拾收拾，六爷，一路走好！

众人：六爷，一路走好！

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Brother Four: Brother Six, Brother Four vows to be revenged on you.

Brother Five: Brother Six, Brother Five vows to be revenged on you.

Brother Seven: Brother Six, Brother Seven vows to be revenged on you. Brother Two is drunk, he asked me to tell you that he vows to be revenged on you.

Brother Three: Brother Six, Brother Three vows to be revenged on you. Brother Two is not drunk, he is angry! Brother One doesn't want us to put our life at risk. Can we call ourselves bandits if we don't? Brother One shouldn't listen to him. Tang is not a <u>good thingy</u>.

Counsellor Tang: Master Six, Silang Huang's move was called "Killing without a sword". I advised your father "Killing Huang by destroying his soul". We can't fight openly! How can we make money if we fight them?

Pockmark Zhang: Six, earning money means anything to us? I don't want to destroy Huang's soul, instead, I haven't come up with a good idea. I will pull Silang Huang up by the roots. Give me some time. Six, Father vows to be revenged on you! Stay calm! Master Six, have a safe journey.

All: Master Six, have a safe journey!

English subtitles

Brother Four: F6, D4 swears to avenge you!

Brother Five: F6, E5 swears to avenge you!

Brother Seven: F6, G7 swears to avenge you! B2 is drunk, he asked me to tell you, he swears to avenge you!

Brother Three: F6, C3 swears to avenge you! B2 is not drunk, he is angry! A1 doesn't want us to fight. Can we call ourselves bandits if we don't? A1 shouldn't listen to him. That counselor Soup is <u>a snake</u>.

Counsellor Tang: Master Six, Huang's move was called "Killing without a sword". My advice was "Fuck the battle, win the war". We can't fight openly! How can we make money if we fight them!

Pockmark Zhang: F6… You think money means anything to me? I don't like Soup's advice, but I don't have a better idea. I shall pull Huang up by the roots. Give me some time. Son, father swears to avenge you! Pull yourself together. Master Six, have a safe journey.

All: Master Six, have a safe journey!

Screenshots

Figure 5.10 Author's screenshot depicting the character Six's gravestone (Let the bullets fly 2011).

Analysis

The Chinese dialogue and the Chinese subtitles are slightly different as the latter omits the rhotacisation. In the Chinese original, all the bandits have numbers instead of names: one, two, three etc. The numbering is determined by age, one is the eldest and six the youngest. The absurdity of the bandits' unconventional numerical naming system is an example of the recurring theme of the absurd in black comedy. In translating the bandits' names into English, the subtitler changes them to a combination of a letter and a number, such as A1, B2 and C3, which makes them sound like grid references on a map. Intriguingly, this suggests the bandits are named numerically in Chinese but spatially in English. Initially, Six's tombstone is not visible because the cameras focuses on the facial expression of the bandits as they passionately and dramatically vow vengeance. Six's gravestone only becomes visible in the last shot, and the revelation that it is in the shape of a huge yellow wooden hand triggers laughter at this absurdity. In Chinese culture, the hand gesture represented in this absurd gravestone symbolises the number six. Yet for an English audience the gesture symbolises something else – it is a 'shaka' or 'hang loose' sign – a friendly gesture often used in surfing communities. The shaka clashes completely with the vows of vengeance made in the scene which surrounds it. The gravestone is funny in its absurdity for both audiences but for different reasons as a result of its different cultural connotations. The humour related to Six's gravestone illustrates the point that "A characteristic of black humour is that the line between fantasy and reality is flickering" (*Encyclopaedia of 20th-Century American Humour* cited in Bucaria 2009, p.85). There is a close relationship between black humour and surrealism. "Surrealism was a means of reuniting conscious and unconscious realms of experience so completely that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational

world in an absolute reality, a surreality" (Breton 1924 cited in Mostafa 2005, p.216) In a surreal moment in another scene in the film, Six opens up his stomach to demonstrate that he has only consumed one bowl of cold noodles, which also functions as an allusion to a Chinese migrant worker, Haichao Zhang, who had 'open-chest surgery' to prove that he was suffering from pneumoconiosis, the deadly lung disease (AsiaNews 2009). The humour in both the original film and its English subtitles is multimodal but it works differently in each language.

In the Chinese dialogue, the characters who speak the Northern dialect contribute to creating humour. The Northern dialect is audible in this scene in the words "tell" ('utterance' 话儿), "we" ('all' 大伙儿), "snake" ("thingy" 玩意儿), "advice" ('advice/tip' 招儿), "anything" ('thing' 事儿), "root" ("root" 根儿), and "some" ('some/a little/a bit of' 点儿). The dialogue sounds humorous to the Chinese ear because the 'r' sound adds a relaxed tone that creates a comic effect for Chinese audiences. The combination of rhotacisation and the rapidity of speech recalls *Xiangsheng*, the popular comedy art form discussed earlier in this thesis. In the Chinese dialogue, when C3 mentions that Counsellor Tang is not a good person, he speaks Northern dialect: "Tang is not a good thingy". "Thingy" (玩意儿), literally means 'a toy', but it also has a derogatory meaning when referring to someone for whom one feels contempt. The English subtitles render this as "Tang is a snake". The replacement of "thingy" by "snake" introduces a new metaphor. In this way, the subtitle maintains the implied meaning of the Chinese word, achieving dynamic equivalence to show that Tang is a vicious person. However, the dialect humour is lost. It is difficult to translate such dialect humour into English. Díaz-Cintas and Remael argue that "The connotations of different target culture dialects will never be the same as those of the source culture dialects they replace" (2014, p.191). A possible solution is to use a dialect in the TL that itself evokes a humorous effect. However, adapting Chinese dialect humour to English dialect humour without disrupting the flow of the subtitles poses a considerable challenge for the subtitler. Consequently, the subtitler elects to omit the *Erhua* in the English subtitles for this scene, and the dialect humour is lost.

Example 6 Sexual humour, code-switching humour and VEH

Example background

During his banquet, Master Huang proposes to crush the bandits, and he promises to share the rewards if he is successful.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

汤师爷：路，一步一步走！步子迈大了，咔！容易扯着蛋。应该先把 dollar 分清楚。再说接腿儿的事儿。

张麻子：你还聊 dollar 是吧，不聊接腿儿。那你们俩儿聊儿吧！

黄老爷：师爷，你定。

汤师爷：先聊 dollar 吧，dollar 到手，按照惯例，三七分。

张麻子：你也太不仗义了吧，黄老爷为这事儿忙前忙后，你就分人家三成？怎么也得对半分啊！

汤师爷：那我，我错了！

张麻子：你太错了！

黄老爷：师爷，我们还是听县长的，对半分。

汤师爷：哎，好！

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Counsellor Tang: To walk step by step. If striding too much, clunk, the egg (testicle) will be strained. We should distribute dollars first and then talk about how to fix the legs.

Pockmark Zhang: You would like to talk dollars rather than legs? Then the two of you continue the talk.

Master Huang: Counsellor, you decide.

Counsellor Tang: Let's talk dollars first. When the dollars arrive, according to the usual custom, the percentage of the profit sharing is 30% and 70% respectively.

Pockmark Zhang: You are too mean; Master Huang is busy in everything and you only give him 30%? He should get half at least!

Counsellor Tang: I… made a mistake.

Pockmark Zhang: You made a big mistake.

Master Huang: Counsellor.

Counsellor Tang: Yes.

Master Huang: We should listen to the governor and split everything in half.

Counsellor Tang: Well, fabulous.

English subtitles

Counsellor Tang: And walk step by step! If our stride is overextended, clunk, and <u>we go belly up</u>. Let's first sort out the dollars then discuss mending legs.

Pockmark Zhang: You prefer to talk dollars? Not legs? Then the two of you go ahead.

Master Huang: Counsellor, you decide.

Counsellor Tang: Let's talk dollars first. When the dollars arrive, the usual custom, a 30/70 split.

Pockmark Zhang: Isn't that a little ungenerous? Master Huang is busy organizing everything. And you only give him 30%? He should get half at least!

Counsellor Tang: My mistake… Apologies.

Pockmark Zhang: Big mistake.

Master Huang: Counsellor.

Counsellor Tang: Yes.

Master Huang: We should listen to the governor and split everything down the middle.

Counsellor Tang: Great!

Analysis

In the Chinese original, the counsellor employs a metaphor comparing a testicle to an egg to generate humour because "In Chinese, words with reference to male genital organs are extremely taboo" (Yuan L 2015, p.40). "Taboo humour usually juxtaposes two contrasting situations (bad timing, inappropriate circumstances) with a typical example being gallows humour, in which humour is created in stressful, oppressing situations" (Bucaria and Barra 2016, p.5). This is an inappropriate occasion on which to tell a joke, especially when such a joke relates to taboo male genital organs. However, the humour is euphemistic so it brushes up against rather than breaks the boundaries of what is acceptable. Attitudes to sex in China have changed. Before the 1980s, any discussion of sex was regarded as taboo in Chinese culture. More recently, as Nie points out, "Sex has ceased to be a taboo subject in China over the past two or three decades" (2005, p.25). Sex may still be considered to be a private issue in China, but it is no longer completely unmentionable (Buckley 2016). The metaphor of "the egg" used in the Chinese subtitle is a euphemistic expression to refer to the male genital

organs. The use of euphemisms can save people's face and enable them to talk about topics without embarrassing their interlocutors (Yuan L 2015, p.26). Euphemisms also allow the film to make its way past the Chinese censors. Counsellor Tang's euphemistic remark is funny as a result of its exaggeration: "If striding too much, clunk, the egg (testicle) will be strained". Just walking cannot strain testicles. This overstatement brings amusement. The humour is evoked by the incongruity between the counsellor's sexual gag and the audience's normal expectations about characters of his social standing. Tang's bold sexual joke goes against these expectations of him and also clashes with the danger in which he finds himself. Its incongruity is highlighted by Pockmark Zhang's reaction of embarrassed surprise.

However, the sexual joke is completely removed in the English subtitles. The translation of the cultural reference "the egg (testicle)" in the Chinese subtitles involves it being replaced by an idiomatic expression ('to go belly up') in the English subtitles that captures the general meaning. The phrase 'go belly up' is itself a metaphorical idiomatic expression, which is often used to refer to things going wrong. It retains a bodily reference (to bellies rather than testicles) but loses any hint of sexuality. As Chiaro states, "replacing the source VEH (verbally expressed humour) with an idiomatic expression in the TL" (2010b, p.6) is a common translation strategy when dealing with verbal humour in AVT. Though this Chinese metaphor ("the egg") does not exist in English, the closely equivalent English metaphor of 'balls' could have been used. Instead, the subtitler has replaced the reference to testicles with a different idiomatic phrase in the English subtitles for the purpose of expressing the general meaning. Consequently, the sexual humour in the original Chinese shifts to a non-sexual joke in the English subtitles.

Code-switching humour occurs in both the Chinese dialogue and Chinese subtitles. Humour is triggered by incongruity when code-switching occurs between Chinese and English in the scene. When discussing how to split the money, Counsellor Tang speaks Chinese, before suddenly breaking into English with his use of the word "dollar". The counsellor has no knowledge of English – he has learned this word from Master Huang. The translation of the code-switching humour is lost in the English subtitles because this type of humour is only accessible to, and can only be fully appreciated by, speakers of both Chinese and English. This linguistic flattening accounts for a loss of humour in the English subtitles here.

Weaving together the visual mode and the verbal mode generates humour in this scene. The counsellor believes that sorting out the distribution of money is the primary task. He first suggests splitting the money according to the usual custom: "a 30/70 split". His suggestion is that 70% of the money goes to Master Huang, and he and the governor receive the remaining 30%. The audience understands this. However, as soon as he finishes this line, Governor Zhang suddenly accuses him of being an ungenerous person, and ripostes "Master Huang is busy in everything and you only give him 30%? He should get half at least!" This comment surprises both the counsellor and Master Huang, illustrated by their respective facial expressions. The counsellor is rendered speechless, and his visible confusion shows that the governor has misinterpreted his utterance. Master Huang's facial expression reflects his dissatisfaction and anger. Their contrasting facial expressions provide a visual means to enhance the verbal comic effect. Counsellor Tang suddenly realises the governor's intention is to make them both more money, and he leaves the mistake uncorrected, apologising profusely.

The sexual humour of the Chinese original is changed into non-sexual humour in the English subtitles, and the humour works differently in the different linguistic context. Code-switching humour is not transferred to the English subtitles at all because of the linguistic flattening of the multilingual dialogue. However, the scene remains funny for the TL audience because it weaves together different humour modes (facial expressions, the verbal mode etc.) to create dynamic, multimodal comic effects.

5.6   Conclusion

Let the Bullets Fly is a key case study for subtitling because the film underlines the challenges of translating Chinese black comedy, a genre which is deeply rooted in a variety of cultural allusions and which offers commentary on Chinese history, culture and society. This chapter has evaluated the multimodal ways in which this film's English subtitles mitigate and compensate for the loss of Chinese cultural humour which cannot be easily translated for an anglophone audience. Transferring cultural humour is traditionally regarded as the trickiest task for translators, which tends to result in a "culture bump", to use Carol M. Archer's term. Archer argues "Such an allusion may well fail to function in the target text as it is not part of the TL reader's culture" (cited in Leppihalme 1997, p.4). However, the cultural humour of

Chinese black comedy is meaningfully transferred to the TL in this case study film because this humour in the TL does not entirely depend on the linguistic material. Some cultural terms from the original Chinese can be redeployed with sufficient contextual information as a means of generating humour in English. Where other cultural terms cannot, the English subtitles mitigate this loss with complex and dynamic combinations of heterogeneous complex humour. The challenge of translating cultural humour gives rise to intriguing subtitling solutions.

Chapter 6 The Translation of humour in the Chinese martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt* (2015)

6.1   Introduction

The martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt* is a key example of this Chinese film genre. This chapter explores the complex multimodal strategies employed by the subtitler to transfer humour when translating a film from a genre steeped in Chinese culture and references for an anglophone market. Two factors motivate the selection of *Monster Hunt* as this chapter's case study. Firstly, it is one of the most successful films ever in its genre. Xin points out that *Monster Hunt* (2015) set a new record as the biggest Chinese film ever in domestic box-office revenue (2015). Secondly, the film is a quintessential example of the martial arts genre, comprising complex, multiple layers of different types of humour whose powerful interactions and translation challenges offer insights into the discipline of subtitling. The subtitling of *Monster Hunt* uses an intriguing mix of humour strategies. Therefore, it is an ideal case for the exploration of the multimodal nature of comedy and its translation. This chapter focuses on the cultural specificities of the martial arts genre and the slapstick humour which lies at the heart of this film. Slapstick physical humour is one of the easiest modes of humour to translate or subtitle because the body is a universal. However, as this chapter lays out, the slapstick humour of Chinese martial arts film works in tandem with a shifting array of other humour modes which need to be considered. Thus, the chapter presents representative examples of humour, classifies them and examines the transposition of humour through the process of subtitling. It establishes a hierarchy of humour types in the film, paying special attention to how different semiotic modes interact to contribute to humour in the Chinese original and how this humour is transferred to an English-speaking audience. It also notes that this film speaks to some of the other genres already explored in this thesis. The theme of gender equality, for example, echoes the discussion of women's independence in Chapter 4 on the chick flick *Finding Mr. Right*.

6.2   The context of *Monster Hunt* in China and anglophone countries

Monster Hunt is a fantasy martial arts comedy set in ancient China in which monsters and humans live together but not in harmony. The film revolves around the adventures of a mooli-like monster, Huba, and its human father, Tianyin, the mayor of Yongning village. Tianyin unexpectedly gives birth to Huba, the heir to the throne of the monster kingdom.

The film proved to be a major box-office hit (*BBC News* 2015c): "Official figures state *Monster Hunt* grossed RMB2.43bn ($379m/£251m) during its summer theatrical run" (Hoad 2015). However, it is interesting to explore the marked difference between its domestic revenue and its takings in English-speaking countries. While it was hugely successful in its home market of China, the film's box-office revenue in anglophone countries contributed less than 1% of the worldwide total. According to data from Box Office Mojo, [100] *Monster Hunt* earned $385,284,817 globally. The Chinese market contributed $385,252,051 of the total, whereas US audiences spent only $32,766 on seeing the film (Box Office Mojo 2016). A plethora of different reasons might account for *Monster Hunt*'s debacle in English-speaking markets. The film was available only in a limited number of cinemas and received scant publicity. Moreover, the film's plot does not follow what might be regarded as Hollywood norms. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film is "simply a sentimental dollop of easily digestible moral storytelling that doesn't even rely on fully realised characters to make its non-threatening points" (Kerr 2015). This suggests that the film's international failure might at least partially be due to its poor storytelling techniques. Culturally appropriate and resonant in China, the film's cultural content did not transfer well to the anglophone world.

The reasons for *Monster Hunt*'s huge success in China are clear. The film's surreal slapstick humour appealed to Chinese audiences because it followed an established cultural trend for this type of comedy. The slapstick humour "is best exemplified by the Hong Kong mo lei tau (Cantonese for nonsensical) films of the 1990s" (*BBC News* 2015d). Chinese audiences are well versed in *mo lei tau* comedy as a result of Hong Kong comedian and director Stephen Chow's series of successful comedies from the 1990s, which make extensive use of *mo lei tau* humour.[101] The kung fu fighting at the heart of the film also helped ensure its success, building

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[100] Box Office Mojo is the leading online box-office reporting service, which is owned and operated by IMDb.
[101] *Mo lei tau* humour originates from Hong Kong popular culture. *Mo lei tau* is a Cantonese phrase to refer to "nonsensical or illogical" (Yang 2013, p.141). Humour relies on "throwing together utterly disparate subjects to

on the popularity of the martial arts genre in China. The film also benefited from restrictions on imported films in the summer of its release. As BBC News reports, "China severely restricts the release of foreign films to just 34 titles a year so that local titles have a better shot at scoring at the box office" (2015c). Additionally, the film could take advantage of the fame of its director in China. Though the film's costumes, fight sequences and title all clearly signal that it is a martial arts comedy, the movie plays with elements of its genre in intriguing ways. In *Monster Hunt*, a tough female monster is responsible for protecting a man in a role reversal which deconstructs a core convention of martial arts films: that the male protagonist is depicted as a hero. In this case, the main male character, Tianyin, is protected by a female monster hunter, Xiaolan. The theme of gender equality resonates both with core segments of the audience and the gender debates discussed in previous chapters of this thesis.

6.3 Martial arts and martial arts films

Martial arts comedies are a key part of Chinese film history and culture. Though specific examples of the genre have been successfully exported, they pose distinct and fundamental challenges for the subtitler.

Martial arts can be defined as "the various skills or practices that originated as methods of combat" (Lorge 2011, p.3). Chinese martial arts may be referred to in the West by an array of other names including kung fu, gung fu and Chinese boxing (Kennedy 2005, p.7). Martial arts are often referred to as 'wushu' in Chinese, which literally means 'military methods'. Wushu's first appearance dates back to the early sixth century in the *Wen Xuan* (Kennedy 2005, p.10). In general, Chinese martial arts comprise different systems which can be classified into three categories: striking, grappling, and weapons (Kennedy 2005, p.7). Striking emphasises "hand strikes, punches, kicks, and elbow and knee strikes" (Kennedy 2005, p.8). Grappling is based on "throwing the opponent, locking up the opponent's limbs, or choking the opponent" (Kennedy 2005, p.8). Martial arts in the weapons category use "one or many of the traditional Chinese weapons" (Kennedy 2005, p. 8).[102]

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create a feeling of absurdity and incongruity (Yang 2013, p.141).

[102] The list of eighteen weapon skills from the Yuan dynasty (from thirteenth century to fourteenth century) includes spears, bows, crossbows, guns, whips, metal tablets, long swords, chains, truncheons, fu-axes, yue-axes, shields, staffs and spears, and rakes (Lorge 2011, p.147).

Martial arts films are the oldest genre in Chinese cinema. Teo (2009, p.1) points out that the genre originated in China, but flourished in Hong Kong.[103] It is notable that martial arts performances were banned, and publications and films related to martial arts controlled in Mainland China between 1949 and 1978 (Lorge 2011, p.227). Martial arts, as a traditional part of Chinese culture, were viewed as running counter to the modernisation which was being promoted by the Chinese authorities. As Lorge states, "The communist leadership focused their efforts on modernising China" (2011, p.226). The violent essence of martial arts was also perceived as being conducive to internal rebellion and as a threat to social stability. Lorge suggests, "Even in its purely performative manifestation, the movements of martial arts are about effective violence" (2011, p.5). In the face of these controls, industries related to martial arts moved from Mainland China to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Martial arts films returned to China in the 1980s and have boomed since then. In the new millennium, some films from the genre have become blockbusters (Teo 2009, pp.192-193). The release of *Hero* in 2002 received official approval and has come to be regarded as the moment when the martial arts genre achieved acceptance. The fate of martial arts films is inextricably bound up with the reform and opening-up policies of 1978. Historically, martial arts were considered to be a form of self-defence in China, but they have gradually come to be seen as forms of exercise and become associated with well-being in modern times (Kennedy 2005, p.16). Moreover, Teo (2009, p.193) argues that the Chinese government has come to promote martial arts as a means of enhancing its soft power. As Teo points out, "The martial arts genre is a natural fit for China's ambitions to compete internationally using cinema as an instrument of soft power" (2009, p.195).

The modern genre of martial arts comedy films can be traced back to Bruce Lee's *Way of the Dragon* (1972), where the lead character's unfamiliarity with foreign customs is used to humorous effect (West 2006, p.129). However, the history of martial arts comedy itself is far

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[103] The Chinese martial arts film genre dates back to the 1920s. Martial arts films shifted from Mainland China to Taiwan and Hong Kong, and the Chinese audience is familiar with this genre thanks to the flourishing of Hong Kong martial arts films. The establishment of the genre is closely related to the Shanghai filmmaking community. Teo points out that "Without the Shanghai filmmakers, the genre might not have flourished in Hong Kong" (2009, p.52).

older than this. It has its origins in "live performance-variety, music hall and burlesque, street acrobatics, northern-style martial arts scenes in the Beijing Opera, and the amalgamation of martial arts, dance and drama" (Hunt 2003, p.109). The genre is complex. West points out that the essence of martial arts comedy lies in the "de-mythologising and diminishing of the kung fu hero" (2006, p.137). The employment of comic elements in martial arts films can, to some extent, neutralise their brutal, bloody action scenes (Suo 2010, p.68). Jackie Chan's highly successful martial arts comedies are a prime example of this. Chan's *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* (1978) is key to the development of martial arts comedy film. Chan's fame is built on his establishment of a new form of martial arts comedy, specifically "the mixture of stuntwork, silent slapstick and action-adventure" (Hunt 2003, p.102). According to Jia (2005, p.10), the success of *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *Drunken Master* (both 1978) provided a template for martial arts comedy, and the two movies were pivotal in the shift from traditional sword fighting to contemporary martial arts films.

The 1980s witnessed this shift from traditional martial arts films to their modern incarnations. Much of this change can be attributed to Hong Kong's economic prosperity and exploration of its own identity.[104] Filmmakers in this genre increasingly focused on Hong Kong and its contemporary society (West 2006, p.148). Contemporary Cantonese pop music increasingly came to replace classical Cantonese music within this era's martial arts films (West 2006, p.155). Representative movies include *Project A* (1983), *Wheels on Meals* (1984) and *Police Story* (1985). As martial arts comedies, all of these films share a similar pattern: "action-comedy-action-comedy-repeat" (West 2006, p.153).

Hong Kong martial arts comedies cannot be explored without reference to Chow Sing Chi (Stephen Chow) whose *mo lei tau* ('nonsense comedy') has come to constitute a key part of the martial arts genre (West. p.174): "A mo lei tau scene gives one the feeling of incongruity, consisting of rapid comic banter, non-sequiturs, anachronisms, fourth wall references,[105] and

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[104] The British government had jurisdiction over Hong Kong until 1997. In 1982, the Conservative government of the day negotiated with China a transition period and the future road map for Hong Kong. Many citizens, West (2006, pp.147–148) points out, did not at that time consider themselves to be part of Mainland China or British.
[105] The "fourth wall" is an expression stemming from the world of theatre. It is an imaginary wall that separates the audience from the action on stage in a play or film, which is said to be broken when an actor talks directly to the audience or starts talking as themselves rather than as their character (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'the fourth wall').

Cantonese slang and wordplay" (Sfetcu 2014). *Monster Hunt* owes much to *mo lei tau,* and while incongruity is easy for the subtitler to translate, the rapid comic banter and historical references, however inaccurate, Cantonese slang and wordplay all mark the film as an interesting case study for subtitling studies. Each of these genre features poses different questions for the subtitler.

In contrast to the contemporary focus of Hong Kong martial arts comedy, the Mainland take on the genre tends to focus on ancient China. The historical martial arts blockbusters that China produced in the early 2000s make this trend clear: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004). Fifty-four historical comedies were released between 2000 and 2013 (Pan 2015, p.17). Despite the historical settings, Pan (2015 pp.20-29) argues, this genre of film comedy mixes a range of ingredients including popular language from the internet, dialect, *mo lei tau*, and subversion and satirisation of contemporary social issues. *Monster Hunt* fits into the martial arts comedy genre as it is a hybrid of comic elements and martial arts action. Comic elements in the film include dialect usage (Northeastern dialect), *mo lei tau* (a male gives birth to a baby monster) and subversion (the gender subversion of childbirth). The fight scenes between humans and monsters provide the martial arts action. The fight between Gang and the monster demonstrates a key component of any martial arts film: martial arts techniques are tested in mortal combat.

6.4   Types of humour in *Monster Hunt*

Three different types of humour are clearly identifiable in *Monster Hunt*: VEH, heterogeneous complex humour and non-verbal humour. Using the concept of multimodality, this section analyses the interplay of different semiotic modes to explore the complexities and barriers involved in transferring Chinese humour to English-speaking audiences through this film's subtitles. The examples selected illustrate the strategies used to translate different types of humour in the English subtitles.

6.4.1   Verbally expressed humour

VEH is dependent on language, and its comic effects are created through the medium of language. It is often particularly difficult to subtitle in martial arts comedies because of the

speed of the action and the accompanying banter and wordplay. To explore the complex processes involved in VEH in the Chinese source and English subtitles, this section breaks down *Monster Hunt*'s VEH into three subcategories: the humour of set expressions and wordplay (example 1), dialect humour (example 2) and code-switching humour (example 3).

6.4.1.1 Set expression humour and wordplay

Example 1

Example background

In the home of Tianyin (the hero of the film), a conversation between the female monster hunter, Xiaolan (the heroine of the film), and the monster couple, Zhugao and Pangying, starts to escalate into a fight.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

竹高：妖孽，你惹事生非。

小岚：报上名来!

天荫：宋，宋天荫。

小岚：没说你。

胖莹：独孤无名，冷艳香。

竹高：你什么时候改的?

胖莹：刚刚。

竹高：本来叫胖莹不是挺好吗？敢打我老婆！雕虫小技。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Zhugao: Evil demons, you stir up trouble.

Xiaolan: Tell me your names!

Tianyin: Song… Tianyin Song.

Xiaolan: Not you.

Pangying: Wuming Dugu, Yanxiang Leng.

Zhugao: When did you change your name?

Pangying: Just now.

Zhugao: Your original name <u>Fat Ying</u> is much better. You dare to hit my wife. <u>A small/petty skill.</u>

English subtitles

Zhugao: <u>Lady</u>, <u>what's your problem</u>?

Xiaolan: Tell me your names!

Tianyin: Song… Song Tianyin.

Xiaolan: Not you.

Pangying: I'm <u>the gorgeous, elegant and coldest Lily</u>.

Zhugao: When did you make that up?

Pangying: Just now.

Zhugao: I like your original name <u>Ying</u> better. How dare you hit my wife? Your <u>skills are medio…</u>

<u>cre…</u>

Screenshots

Figure 6.1 Author's screenshot depicting the character Zhugao's surprised and confused facial expressions (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.2 Author's screenshot depicting the character Ying looking pleased (Monster hunt 2015).
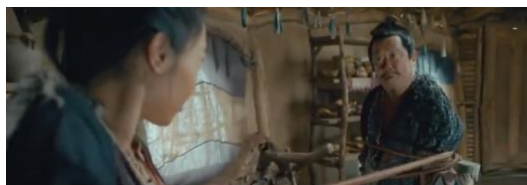
Figure 6.3 Author's screenshot shows that Zhugao is defeated by Xiaolan and he looks anguished (Monster hunt 2015).

Analysis

Chiaro's (2010b) approach is pivotal to understanding how humour works in the translation of Chinese set phrases in this scene. She formulates four different translation strategies for how VEH can be transposed from the SL to the TL in AVT (Chiaro 2010b, p.6):

a)   Leave the VEH unchanged.

b)   Replace the source VEH with a different instance of VEH in the TL.

c)   Replace the source VEH with an idiomatic expression in the TL.

d)   Ignore the VEH altogether.

For this example, only strategies b) and d) are relevant in explaining how VEH is translated from Chinese into English. Therefore, the other strategies are not analysed.

The Chinese subtitles are a faithful transcription of the screen dialogue. In this example, humour in the Chinese original is a direct consequence of the way the monster couple express themselves to the monster hunter. Specifically, the atmosphere is becoming more tense after monster hunter Xiaolan commands Tianyin to prepare the human meat and liver for her lunch. This provokes the male monster, Zhugao, to anger – he thumps the table and says defiantly "Evil demons, you stir up trouble". His remark is full of irony because Zhugao himself is the real monster, yet he dares to irritate and scold the monster hunter, which is a clear instance of VEH. The SL line "Evil demons, you stir up trouble" is rendered as "Lady, what's your problem?" in the English subtitles. This is perfectly correct from a syntactic perspective, and the translation employs strategy d) ignoring the VEH altogether. However, this translation strategy has the consequence that English-speaking viewers are unable to grasp what is causing Xiaolan's irritation (Zhugao's deliberately provocative remarks). This is because much of the semantic content has been drastically weakened as a result of ignoring the VEH in the translation from the SL to the TL, with the outcome that the comic effect is dramatically reduced. When Xiaolan draws her sword to point at the monster couple and snarls, "Tell me your names", Tianyin's response surprises the viewer and triggers laughter. Humour is elicited by incongruity. Meanwhile, when he is startled into stuttering "Song... Song Tianyin", his trembling voice and fearful facial expression, accompanied by a kinesic gesture of raising his

right hand, act as paralinguistic modes to reinforce the verbal humour. After Xiaolan replies "Not you", the female monster sings her own praises as "Wuming Dugu, Yanxiang Leng" (dubbing herself "the gorgeous, elegant and coldest Lily" in the English subtitles). There is a stark and humorous contrast between her real name, Pangying (which literally means "Fat Ying"), and her flattering made-up name. However, the English subtitle omits 'fat'. The Chinese audience and anglophone viewers therefore have different levels of humour at their disposal. In the Chinese original, the female monster describes her name as "Wuming Dugu" and "Yanxiang Leng" respectively, which contains a double meaning. In Chinese, "Wuming" literally means 'unknown', and "Dugu" refers to 'unicorn'. Wuming Dugu is a name adapted from Qiubai Dugu, a mighty warrior who appears in the work of Chinese 'wuxia' (martial arts) novelist Yong Jin. This character is known for his exceptionally powerful martial arts skills. This intertextual reference suggests that the female monster's skills are as powerful as Qiubai Dugu's and she cannot be defeated. Yanxiang literally means 'colourful and aromatic', and her surname, Leng, refers to 'cold'. Her selection of her name serves to suggest that she is an outstanding natural beauty. In reality, she is a fat, unattractive monster who is comically bad at kung fu. The sharp contrast between her real name and her made-up one serves to generate ironic humour for the Chinese audience.

Rather than retaining the literal translation of the female monster's name, in the English subtitles, a conspicuous effort has been made to find an equivalent expression to achieve the transfer of the VEH. Schröter suggests that "The more complex or language-specific a wordplay is, the more likely it is to be simplified, replaced or omitted in the translation" (2004, p.167). The English subtitles for this scene are highly successful and even more humorous than the original Chinese subtitles. This is because the literal meaning of the Chinese name "Yanxiang Leng" is brilliantly embodied in the single word "Lily". Such linguistic coincidence between English and Chinese greatly contributes to the transfer of the verbal humour into the TL. The English subtitled version recreates the comic effect by means of omission and employing Chiaro's approach b) replacing the source VEH with a different instance of VEH in the TL. This not only ensures that the subtitle is easy to comprehend, but also significantly intensifies the humour of the scene. The anglophone viewer expects a gorgeous, elegant being and gets something comically different. Several factors probably contribute to translation strategies b) and d) being used. Although the anglophone viewer cannot easily

decipher the connotations hidden in the Chinese original names and their humorous intents, the subtitler carefully triggers verbal humour in other ways.

Music, a frequently used semiotic mode in *Monster Hunt*, has a clear role in emphasising the VEH in this scene. Ying's remark "I'm the gorgeous, elegant and coldest Lily" is accompanied by exotic music. This works together with a series of kinesic actions to enhance the comic effect. The first kinesic action is Ying's enchanting hand gesture, which looks like 'orchid fingers'.[106] The humour is reinforced by Zhugao's facial expression as he reacts to his wife's statement. Looking astonished by Ying's boast that she is "the gorgeous, elegant and coldest Lily", Zhugao asks his wife "When did you make that up?" (Figure 6.1). Ying's utterance makes no sense to him. His facial expression provides a marked contrast with his wife's obvious pleasure as she revels in what she sees as her own beauty (Figure 6.2).

Elsewhere in the film, humour is mainly achieved through kinesic means in the kung fu scenes. They are full of fierce fighting (e.g. tables are overturned in the neat dining room). No subtitles appear on-screen in the core fight scenes which in no way affects the viewer's ability to understand this humour. The viewer's attention shifts completely to the martial arts which in and of themselves convey meaning. In this scene, armed with a sword and umbrella respectively, Xiaolan and Ying start fighting to the rhythm of the music. Special effects are used in the fight scenes so the characters can fly through the air. Loud, tense music contributes to the intensity of the fighting. Overall, humour is produced from kinesic actions as well as other modes including facial expressions and music.

There are two sources of humour in the utterance "Your skills are medio… cre…": Chinese idiom ('mediocre skills') and paralanguage (peculiar voice and facial expression). 'Mediocre skills' is the key element in this sentence to convey humour in the SL. In Chinese, 'mediocre skills' ('insignificant skills' '雕虫小技') is a set phrase that has both a literal and a figurative meaning.[107] Literally, '雕' (Pinyin 'diao') means 'curve', '虫' ('chong') refers to a type of ancient

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[106] 'Orchid fingers' is a finger pattern which looks like flowers. It stems from Chinese opera, where it is used by actresses to express different emotions and characters(Ma 2012, p.345). In opera performance, 'Orchid fingers' are used to present the ideal feminine pose (Ma 2012, p.345).
[107] This set phrase originates in a story from the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) in which the young poet Bai Li wrote a letter to Chaozong Han (mayor of Xiangyang) looking for a job. At the end of the letter, to show modesty, Bai Li

Chinese script: 'bird-and-insect script', '小ˇ' ('xiao') implies 'small', and '技' ('ji') signifies 'skill'. The phrase's literal meaning is 'an insignificant skill like carving worm-like characters'. As discussed, the figurative meaning refers to insignificant skills. As a common humour technique, exaggeration is frequently used for comic purposes in audiovisual texts. This technique refers to "Making an exaggeration or overstatement; reacting in an exaggerated way; exaggerating the qualities of a person or product" (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.153). 'Small' is the key element of this idiom in which the use of exaggeration presses the argument that monster hunter Xiaolan's mastery of kung fu is insignificant. Its translation as 'mediocre' augments the entertaining effect in the receiving culture because Xiaolan's martial arts skills are astonishing, and she wins the battle against the monster couple. Additionally, the paralanguage enhances the VEH. Zhugao's quasi-robotic voice coupled with his contorted, anguished facial expression (Figure 6.3) when uttering the word "skill" makes the idiom more humorous. His strange voice is as a consequence of losing the battle against Xiaolan. Specifically, he has been strangled with a rope which almost chokes him, making his voice sound low-pitched, weak and peculiar. This strange voice contrasts with the loud, strong and high-pitched voice used on his previous utterance – "How dare you hit my wife" as he witnessed his wife's humiliating defeat by Xiaolan. This marked vocal contrast serves to reinforce the VEH.

In the translation of this idiom in the English subtitles, "small" is adapted to "mediocre" in order to avoid any confusion or ambiguity. The word "mediocre" means 'not very good' (*Cambridge English Dictionary*, s.v. 'mediocre'). Although the semantic content is well preserved in the English subtitles, the translation diminishes the exaggerating effect which is the root of comedy in the Chinese idiom. The subtitler inserts an ellipsis between the third and fourth syllables of the word ("medio…cre…") in the English subtitle to attract the TL audience's attention to Zhugao's unusual voice. The phonetic barrier between Chinese and English is so great that the English-speaking audience might not otherwise be able to perceive the subtle change of his voice, which would prevent them from comprehending all elements of the humour. In a multimodal text, comic effects are created by the interplay of two or more modes. In this case, the extra punctuation in conjunction with Zhugao's ferocious facial expression is crucial to the English-speaking audience. Humour in the English subtitles is

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wrote that his insignificant writing skills are not good enough to be appreciated.

maintained yet in a different form from the Chinese original because the SL audience understands this instance of humour culturally.

This analysis shows that the successful transfer of VEH from Chinese into English is a tricky task for subtitlers, which underlines the fact that VEH travels badly across languages due to both linguistic and cultural differences (Raskin 2008, p.569). Overcoming such translation challenges requires the translator to apply creativity and discernment to recreate the SL humour in the TL. In this example, the translator adds ellipsis and plays with language to facilitate effective humour transfer into English. However, a strategy of omission is also employed so the female monster's name, "Fat Ying", is not transposed into the English subtitles. VEH is the predominant mode of humour in this scene. Nevertheless, humorous effects are maintained in the English subtitled version through the interaction of VEH with other modes including facial expressions, music, kinesic actions and paralanguage.

6.4.1.2 Dialect humour and phonological humour (polysemy)

Language variation (dialects, specific accents and registers) can be used as a vehicle for humour (Minutella cited in Rosa et al. 2014, pp.68-69). More specifically, Minutella draws attention to five main types of dialects that are found in films: "geographical dialects, temporal dialects, social dialects, standard/non-standard dialects and idiolects" (2014, p.69). Dialects are crucial to the humour in *Monster Hunt* as the analysis of this example makes clear. The selected example is an instance of geographical dialect humour. Specifically, the utterance by the Head Chef uses the Northeastern dialect of Chinese.

Example

Example background
The subordinates give their boss, the Head Chef, such a loud welcome, they scare her. She rebukes them in the Northeastern dialect. She plans to cook the monster.

Chinese lines (subtitles)
手下：大师傅!

厨师：哎呀妈呀，啥玩意儿啊。吓我一哆嗦。别整这套虚的了。今儿来的妖啊，老厉害了。老美味了。啥动静啊？吵吵啥呢？

手下：大师傅，这只妖打不开啊。

厨师：咋这么想不开呢？

妖：就那么想不开。

厨师：乖，妖固有一死，早死晚死，都是要死。听话啊。

妖：宁死不开。

厨师：小样儿。找死。

手下：好。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Subordinates: Big Chef!

Chef: <u>Oh, mother</u>, <u>what a thing</u>. <u>I was shivering with fear</u>. <u>Don't play empty game</u> / don't do the unrealistic thing. The monster that we have today is <u>very</u> powerful and delicious. <u>Where</u> did the noise come from? <u>What</u> are you quarrelling about?

Subordinates: Big Chef. This monster cannot be opened.

Chef: <u>Why</u> are you so stubborn?

Monster: I am just stubborn.

Chef: Be obedient. Any monster <u>dies</u>, sooner or later. It's just a matter of time. Be obedient, OK?

Monster: I would rather die than opening up.

Chef: <u>Little buddy</u>, look at you. You are courting <u>death.</u>

Subordinates: Great!

English subtitles

Subordinates: Head Chef!

Chef: <u>What the… You guys are too much</u>. <u>Scared the hell out of me</u>! Pay attention. The monsters we have today… are <u>so</u> awesome… and delicious. <u>What</u>'s happening? <u>What</u>'s the problem?

Subordinates: Head Chef. Head Chef. We can't open this monster.

Chef: <u>Why</u> don't you cooperate?

Monster: No way!

Chef: Listen. Every monster <u>dies</u>. Sooner or later, it's just a matter of time. Open up, okay?

Monster: No way.

Chef: <u>You stubborn monster</u>. You've asked for <u>it</u>.

Subordinates: Fine.

Screenshots
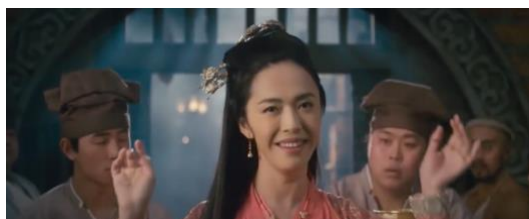
Figure 6.4 Author's screenshot depicting the character the head chef looking elegant and attractive (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.5 Author's screenshot depicting the character the head chef's kinesic actions (Monster hunt 2015).

Analysis

There are two sources of VEH in this example: the use of dialect and polysemy. "Open" (开) is the polysemic element in this case, and in the Chinese original, expressions such as '打不开' ("can't be opened"), '想不开' ("stubborn") and '宁死不开' ("opening up") all share the word "open" ('开'). This use of polysemy creates a comic effect through the contrast between melodic phonic relevance and semantic irrelevance. This humour is only accessible to the Chinese-speaking audience. The English subtitles do not retain any of this humorous effect. The subtitler translates '想不开' as "cooperate" and renders '宁死不开' as "no way", unable to recreate the SL's phonological humour in the TL.

The humour in this example also relies on the use of the Northeastern dialect. The Northeastern dialect is also called Northeastern Mandarin and consists of a subgroup of

Mandarin varieties[108] spoken in the northeastern part of China including Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces and some parts of Inner Mongolia. There are a number of reasons why the filmmakers would choose to use the Northeastern dialect in this film over other Chinese dialects.[109] Most crucially, the Northeastern dialect shares phonological similarities with Standard Mandarin. This similarity ensures the largest Chinese audience possible can understand the dialogue. Additionally, the televised Spring Festival Gala or New Year Gala has helped to spread the Northeastern dialect, which is associated with its performances of *Xiaopin*. This comedic form has been discussed in previous chapters and is further elaborated later in this section. As the Spring Festival is the most important festival in Chinese culture, the annual TV broadcast of the gala entertainment show on Chinese New Year's Eve attracts huge numbers of Chinese viewers. Watching it with family has become a national tradition since its debut in 1983 (Zhao 1998, p.43). Broadcaster CCTV's New Year Gala is the world's most-watched TV show, attracting approximately 700 million viewers (Bloomberg 2018).[110] Through this show, Chinese audiences nationwide have become familiar with the Northeastern dialect. The inextricable connection between *Xiaopin* and the Northeastern dialect means it is worth exploring the *Xiaopin* form in some more detail as the background context to this example.

Xiaopin refers to sketch comedy or "theatrical skits performed on stage or television" (Du 1998, p.382). The term literally means 'little thing', in which *xiao* denotes 'small' or 'little', and *pin* signifies 'quality' or 'to savour'. *Xiaopin* is derived from *Errenzhuan*[111] (literally meaning 'two persons rotation'), a folk comic art originating from the rural areas of northeast China. Short skits are performed by two or more actors, and performances last no more than fifteen minutes. *Xiaopin* is known for the use of props to tell a simple story, and humour is generated by the actors' dialogue (via homophones and dialects) and physical actions (pantomime and

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[108] "Mandarin is composed of eight groups, viz. Beijing Mandarin, Dongbei (Northeastern) Mandarin, Jiao-liao Mandarin, Ji-lu Mandarin, Zhongyuan (central plains) Mandarin, Lan-yin Mandarin, Xinan (Southwestern Mandarin), and Jianghuai Mandarin'' (Cai 2013, p.18).

[109] Norman (2003, p.72) classifies Chinese dialects into seven groups including Mandarin, Wu, Min, Kakka, Yue, Gan and Xiang.

[110] CCTV is China Central Television, and it is China's state TV broadcaster.

[111] *Errenzhuan* is a folk art form, "a rather vulgar form of performance quite inferior to the highly refined Peking Opera" (Simmons 2016, p.65). As a form of *Quyi* (a general term for traditional Chinese oral performing arts), <u>Errenzhuan</u> is rooted in the normal life of ordinary people. It is characterised by its humorous use of a strong Northeastern dialect and involves storytelling, singing and dancing by a pair of performers.

symbolic gestures derived from traditional Chinese theatre) (Du 1998, pp.383-385). As one of the key figures of *Xiaopin*, the comedian Benshan Zhao's humorous performances entirely in the Northeastern dialect have contributed to this dialect's visibility. Stimulated by the success of Xiaopin, the TV series *Village Romance* (乡村爱情故事, Pinyin *Xiangcun Aiqing Gushi*) starring Benshan Zhao uses the Northeastern dialect (Simmons 2016, p.66). As a result of this trend, the Northeastern dialect has been used in many Chinese films and other TV series.

The characters in *Xiaopin* are often clowns, peasants or workers from the northeast. This is because northeast China not only plays a key role in supplying and exporting agricultural products, but it is also the base for traditional or heavy industry. In their performances of *Xiaopin*, the actors speak in strong Northeastern dialect and wear rustic outfits. The characters are funny, friendly and forthright. The use of dialect kindles laughter based on the audience's attitudes towards peasants, their old-fashioned clothes and rustic dialect. *Xiaopin* harnesses humour as defined in superiority theories, where humour results from a feeling of superiority when encountering "human incompetence, clumsiness, clowning and misfortune" (Morreall 2016, p.140). The audience enjoys the mocking of the character's unrefined and rustic dialect.

In this scene from *Monster Hunt*, the Chinese subtitles are a verbatim transcription of the screen dialogue. Humour emerges as the chef's typical Northeastern dialect challenges Chinese viewers' expectations because Standard Mandarin is spoken throughout the rest of the film. This sudden shift from Standard Mandarin to the Northeastern dialect grabs the audience's attention. This example is the only scene in the film where dialect is employed. The Northeastern dialect is distinguished from other dialects by its own specific words and phrases. According to Kurpaska (2010, p.32), specific dialect words are the principal way of differentiating dialects of Chinese. In this example, specific words, phrases and sentences of Northeastern dialect include "oh, mother" ('哎呀妈呀'), "what a thing" ('啥玩意儿啊'), "I was shivering with fear" ('吓我一哆嗦'), "don't do the unrealistic thing" ('别整这套虚的了'), "very" ('老'), "what" ('啥'), "die" ('死') and "little buddy" ('小样儿'). Based on these words and phrases, five features of the Northeastern dialect that differentiate it from Standard Mandarin are summarised here. The first feature is retroflex initials. It is interesting to note that the dental sibilants z-, c-, s- are merged with retroflex zh-, ch-, sh- in the Northeastern

dialect. In this example, *si* ("die" '死') in the Northeastern dialect is pronounced *shi*, and the retroflex initials remind the audience of 'shit' ('屎'). Secondly, the use of *Erhua* or 'retroflexion' or 'r-suffix' is fairly common in the Northeastern dialect, and *Erhua* often appears before nouns. Instances of *Erhua* in this example are "thing" ('玩意儿') and "little buddy" ('小样儿'). Thirdly, certain words are particular to the Northeastern dialect. Distinguished from Standard Mandarin, the interrogative "what" ('啥', *sha*) and the verb "do" ('整', *zheng*) are exclusive to the Northeastern dialect (Simmons 2016, p.74). Simmons (2016, p.75) further points out that "do" ('整') has an array of meanings in the northeast, such as 'to say', 'to put', 'do', 'set up, 'install', 'manage/deal with'. In this example, "do" ('整') means 'do'. Fourthly, the Northeastern pronunciation of the final is different from Standard Mandarin, shifting from –u (o) to –e. In the word 'shivering' ('哆嗦', *duosuo*), the final sound transfers to *dese* in the Northeastern dialect. Simmons (2016, p.69) points out that "the final has a different phonetic realisation after labial initials, and is merged with the final e". The final feature of the Northeastern dialect explored here is the tone. In this example, "do not" ('别', *bie*) is shifted from the second tone to the fourth tone.

Figure 6.4 shows that the Head Chef is attractive. However, her use of strong Northeastern dialect when she speaks is in stark contrast to her elegant appearance. This incongruity is a source of humour. The beautiful lady's use of Northeastern dialect clashes with the audience's established concept of this dialect, which is often related to the unrefined characters in *Xiaopin*. Even some northeasterners poke fun at themselves and call the Northeastern dialect the 'corny accent',[112] which underlines this dialect's 'rustic flavour'.

In terms of translation of the Northeastern dialect into English, the subtitler chooses a strategy of dynamic equivalence to ensure comprehension by the TL audience. The expressions "oh, mother" and "what a thing" are particular to the Northeastern dialect and have specific meanings which might be misunderstood by the TL audience if a literal translation were used.

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[112] The word 'corny' stems from sweetcorn. As mentioned before, northeast China is the most important food production area in China, so people describe the Northeastern dialect as the 'corny accent'. More precisely, 'corny' refers to sweetcorn kernels which is a well-loved specialty of China's northeast. It can be added to porridge, bread, noodles etc.

Therefore, the subtitler opts to use the exclamatory phrase "What the…" as a substitute. "Oh, mother" is an exclamatory phrase in Chinese which is used to express emotions such as surprise, anger or excitement. Equivalent expressions in English could be 'oh, gosh', 'oh dear' or 'Mamma mia'. "A thing" has a derogatory meaning, signifying the Head Chef's contempt for her subordinates to whom she applies the phrase in this context. The use of an ellipsis in the English subtitles is effective and matches the derogatory meaning of the Chinese original because it suggests the omission of an expletive like 'hell' or 'fuck'. The English exclamatory phrase ''What the…'' without the verbalisation of 'hell' or 'fuck' is an elliptical way of making a strong statement without using a taboo word. With the intent of explicitly transferring the semantic content of the original Chinese expressions, the subtitles add another sentence: "You guys are too much". This strategy of amplification[113] or expansion involves the translator adding extra information in the TL to enhance intelligibility. The English-speaking audience's appreciation of the humour here relies heavily on the interaction of the English subtitles with other modes. In combination with the visual mode of facial expression, the subtitles achieve a humorous effect in the TL. "I was shivering with fear" means 'you made me jump', and the subtitler translates it as "scared the hell out of me", which retains the humour by adding the swear word "hell". The phrase "Don't do the unrealistic thing'' in the Chinese subtitles, with its implied meaning of "don't play games" is translated into English by substitution in the TL as "Pay attention". This reveals the Head Chef's disapproval of her subordinates. However, it loses the original phrase's connotation of 'Don't flatter me', with the Head Chef aiming to force her subordinates to concentrate on the job at hand: cooking the monster. When speaking of how delicious the monster is, the Head Chef drools, which looks childish. Her pleasant facial expression again highlights the verbal comedy. 'Old' is used to replace 'very' in the Northeastern dialect. 'Old' is used for emphasis and sounds more vivid than 'very' in Standard Mandarin. The Head Chef's attention is suddenly attracted by the noise that her subordinates are making as they prepare to cook the monster. She then goes over to her subordinates and demands "Where did the noise come from?" and "What are you quarrelling about?" In the original Chinese, both sentences use the interrogative *sha* ('啥') but with different interpretations. In the first sentence, it means "where", and in the second, it refers

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[113] Amplification is a translation strategy proposed by Malone (2016, p.41), who suggests that this strategy can bridge a gap in the knowledge of the target audience.

to "what". "What" is used as the translation of both meanings in the English subtitles, helping them to flow. The subordinates explain that the noise is coming from the resistant monster, who is not willing to be cut open and served up as a dish.

It is worth noting that the utterance "Every monster dies. Sooner or later, it's just a matter of time" is a parody in the original Chinese, intended to generate humour. Parody means "Imitating a style or a genre of literature or other media" (Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004, p.154). The Chinese line here is a parody of the sentence "Though death befalls all men alike, it may be weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than a feather"[114] (Hung 2011, p.213) from the ancient Chinese writer Szuma Chien's article *A Letter to Ren'an,* which aims to highlight the importance and value of an individual's life. Its meaning is summarised as "All men must die, but death can vary in its significance" (Hung 2011, p.213). Through this parody, the Head Chef suggests that the monster should choose an honourable death (and be a monster dish served up to human beings). However, this is humorous because the Head Chef is violating the monster's free will by asking it to be obedient and accept its fate of being eaten for human benefit. Additionally, the Head Chef's Northeastern dialect when pronouncing *si* ("dies") as *shi* together with her sweet smile and cutting gesture reinforce the line's humour. Her action resembles a Peking opera dance movement, rather than anything a real chef would do (Figure 6.5). Humour is generated by the eccentricity of her behaviour which her subordinates greet with rapturous applause and flattery.

As noted, in the Chinese dialogue, *si* ('death' or 'die' '死') in the Northeastern dialect is pronounced *shi*, making the retroflex initial *shi* homophonous with 'shit' ('屎') to indicate the Head Chef's ill-concealed contempt for the monster. This sardonic humour is a warning to the monster that it should give up its resistance. Of course, the phonological variation from *si* ('die') to *shi* ('shit') also sounds like a swear word. The Head Chef addresses the monster as "you" ("little buddy" '小样儿'), with the *Erhua* added at the end of the noun "buddy" sounding relaxing. To the Chinese ear, the 'r-sound' can amplify the entertaining effect of the

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[114] The original Chinese for the quotation from Szuma Chien (Qian Sima) is "人固有一死，或重于泰山，或轻于鸿毛".

lines by evoking a relaxed and casual tone at this tense moment. The reason why *Erhua* sounds humorous is because of its close relationship to *Xiangsheng* ('crosstalk'), as discussed in Chapter 5 on the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly*. The English subtitles for this scene render "Little buddy, you are courting death" as "You stubborn monster. You've asked for it". This strategy of sense-for-sense translation or dynamic translation ensures the readability of the English subtitles, and the overall semantic content of the Chinese original is retained. However, the Northeastern dialect humour is lost in the English subtitles because the comedy in the SL depends so heavily on the audience's awareness of this dialect's linguistic variations (both the retroflex initials and *Erhua*) and their ability to make a connection between the original word and its humorous homophone. The translation of dialect humour is a complex issue, and overcoming this translation hurdle presents a tremendous challenge for subtitlers. As Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014, pp.191-192) suggest, the transfer of humour to the TL depends so heavily on the subtitles' interaction with the film's other modes that it is not worth taking excessive time to render dialect perfectly. The use of dynamic equivalence as a translation strategy for the English subtitles relating to dialect humour in this instance means they do not provide exact equivalence between two dialects across languages. This is because humour is not, for the English-speaking audience, purely dependent on the verbal mode (English subtitles) given the multimodal characteristics of the film. The dialect humour is lost, but overall some humour is retained because the interaction between language and other modes plays a key role in facilitating the TL audience's understanding of the SL.

In summary, the translation of dialect humour poses a formidable challenge for subtitlers given the complexity of linguistic variation involved. The English subtitles in this example show that this type of humour is lost in the TL. However, verbal humour is partially retained thanks to the subtitler's skills and use of appropriate translation strategies. The transfer of humour is not solely based on the verbal mode but also relies on this mode's interaction with other modes, which compensates to a certain degree for the linguistic loss of the verbal mode by locating humour elsewhere.

6.4.1.3   Code-switching humour

Monster Hunt is an important case study for subtitling studies because it includes instances of code-switching to an entirely made-up language. This forces the subtitler to contemplate how to represent the use of a language that does not exist.

Example

Example background

The monster couple argue. The male monster, Zhugao, blames his partner, Pangying, for having an insatiable appetite which delays their business.

Chinese lines

胖莹：哼，装着这瘦骨仙里头，辛苦死我了。

竹高：早跟你说，不办正事，就是贪吃。

胖莹：那瘸子肉香啊。

竹高：死性不改，玛塔塔库拉。

胖莹：说脏话，怂拉迷嘟萨瓦迷它迷它布布。嗷，宝贝。我错了。

Chinese subtitles

胖莹：哼，装着这瘦骨仙里头，辛苦死我了。

竹高：早跟你说，不办正事，就是贪吃。

胖莹：那瘸子肉香啊。

竹高：死性不改。（妖话：玛塔塔库拉。）

胖莹：说脏话。（妖话：混蛋，再骂我）（妖话：我就打你屁股）嗷，宝贝。我错了。

Translation of Chinese lines and subtitles

Pangying: Hum, I feel extremely tired staying in this thin bone fairy.

Zhugao: I told you earlier, you don't do proper business. You are greedy for food.

Pangying: But that cripple's meat is aromatic.

Zhugao: You never change. Ma ta ta ku la. (Monster language)

Pangying: You speak dirty word. Song la mi du sa wa mi ta mi ta bu bu. (Monster language)

Bastard, you scold me again, I will spank your bottom. Oh, baby. I'm wrong (I'm sorry).

English subtitles

Pangying: Hiding in such a skinny shell… is killing me!

Zhugao: See. We have serious business and all you can think about is eating!

Pangying: But that limp smells delicious.

Zhugao: You never learn. (Monster language) Ma ta ta ku la.

Pangying: Foul language? (Monster language) You say that again and (monster language) I'll kick your ass very hard. Oh, baby. You're right. It's all my fault.

Screenshots

Figure 6.6 Author's screenshot depicting the monster couple's different facial expressions (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.7 Author's screenshot shows that Zhugao is punched by his wife (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.8 Author's screenshot depicting the monster couple kissing each other (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.9 Author's screenshot depicting the character Xiaolan showing utter contempt for what the monster couple has done (Monster hunt 2015).

Analysis

Code-switching humour appears in both the Chinese lines and subtitles. Because the monster language[115] is made-up, its semantic reference is inaccessible to the Chinese audience. Hence, the Chinese subtitles translate it into Standard Mandarin for the audience's understanding. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that only one instance of monster language – "Ma ta ta ku la" is maintained in the Chinese subtitles, and this does not present an obstacle to understanding the dialogue. The next line – "Foul language" – clearly communicates that an expletive in an alien language has just been used.

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[115] In China, there are 56 ethnic groups, and the made-up monster language is a mix of different ethnic languages ranging from Tibetic language to Miao language (BeeMedia and AM730 2016). However, the monster language is used purely for humorous purposes and echoes the theme of the film: hunting monsters. It does not have actual meaning.

Humour springs from the incongruity engendered by the sudden switch from Mandarin to monster language. The monster couple use Mandarin for their conversation until Zhugao blames his wife for prioritising eating over serious business. His sudden burst of anger is revealed by his switch to monster language, which triggers humour. Two factors are at play in this instance of code-switching. The monster language is fabricated so it is tailored to the characters' needs and resonates with the film's theme of hunting monsters. Additionally, the swear words ("bastard", "kick your ass") are taboo language which might offend the audience, but having monsters utter them in their own language can minimise the risk of offence. The comic effect created by the code-switching in this scene is reinforced by the non-verbal modes (kinesic actions, facial expressions, and paralanguage). Specifically, the swear words "Ma ta ta ku la" are accompanied by a series of kinesic and non-verbal actions from the female monster that reinforce the verbal humour. Figure 6.6 shows a moment where humour is triggered by the marked contrast in the facial expressions of the female monster and her husband. The female monster screams at him in irritation at his use of an expletive, while her husband's calm facial expression suggests his innocence. In Figure 6.7, Ying punches Zhugao hard to express her anger. This sudden and violent gesture runs counter to the audience's expectations. The incongruity between the verbal language ("You say that again and I'll kick your ass very hard") and the non-verbal modes also stimulates laughter at the monster couple's inappropriate behaviour (kissing each other) when their opponent, the monster hunter, is standing right next to them (Figure 6.8). The humour provoked by this ridiculous situation is reinforced by the monster hunter's expression of disdain as she rolls her eyes contemptuously (Figure 6.9). Paralanguage is another key element in the interplay between the verbal and non-verbal modes. A radical change in paralanguage occurs simultaneously with the code-switching from monster language to Standard Mandarin. The change in the female monster's voice is caused by her husband's kinesic behaviour (kissing her). The resulting contrast in voice is humorous. The female monster's voice when speaking monster language – "I'll kick your ass very hard" – is high-pitched, and her brows are raised. This is contradicted by her subsequent remarks in Mandarin: "Oh, baby. You're right. It's all my fault". For this utterance, her voice changes to a low-pitched tone with a melodious, soft and contented intonation which is in harmony with her cheerful facial expression. It provides a strong and immediate contrast to her previous demeanour.

The loss of code-switching humour in the English subtitles is unavoidable because distinguishing any phonetic difference between monster language and Mandarin in the acoustic channel poses a challenge to the English-speaking audience. However, the comic effect in the TL is not solely reliant on the code-switching humour so humour from other modes can be transferred due to the interplay between different semiotic modes. The non-verbal modes can compensate to some extent for the loss of phonetic humour. Moreover, the monster language phrase "ma ta ta ku la" is maintained in the TL. The subtitler adopts a strategy of addition: adding the statement in brackets to explain explicitly to the TL audience that this expression is "(monster language)". Employing this strategy of foreignisation and supplementation in the English subtitles gives the TL audience an opportunity to spot the subtle change in the dialogue from Mandarin to monster language. It is worth noting that "Bastard, you scold me again" in the Chinese subtitles is rendered in English as "You say that again" with the swear word "bastard" completely omitted. Clearly, omission has been selected as the most suitable translation strategy for this line. [116] In addition, the anger and disappointment embodied in the Chinese original have been neutered through the use of substitution. However, the use of the idiomatic colloquial expression "kick your ass" in the English subtitles does underscore Pingyang's fury in the face of Zhugao's censure. This translation retains the semantic content of "spank your bottom" from the SL and compensates for the toning down represented by "You say that again". In this example, foreignisation and dynamic equivalence are essential tactics for reproducing the Chines humour in the English subtitles.

6.4.2 Heterogeneous complex humour (Chinese cultural humour and non-verbal humour: situational humour)

The cultural humour at the heart of both this case study film and the martial arts comedy genre it represents depends heavily on cultural references which are intrinsically tricky for subtitlers to translate. Cultural references or culture-specific terms are closely linked to a country's cultural, historical or geographical perspective (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p.200).

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[116]Bucaria (2007, p.240) suggests there are four possible strategies for the translation of swear words and strong language: compete omission, weakening, close rendering, and increased effect.

The transfer of such references to a new context is not straightforward. The example analysed in this section combines the categories of cultural humour and situational humour. Humour is generated by the culturally specific word "convenience" in combination with situational elements.

Example

Example background

The monster couple savour monster dishes in the Heaven Restaurant. The conversation revolves around trying to eat the little monster king. Humour is generated by the word "convenience", which has a specific meaning in Chinese culture.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

郑夫人：你们二位为什么不吃呀？

竹高：我要去<u>方便</u>。<u>方便</u>，<u>方便</u>。

胖莹：不是说好多给三百<u>两</u>，有小妖王吃吗？

葛千户：今天大家有口福了，小妖王是新加的，已经在厨房准备。

众人：太好了。

胖莹：那就太好了。我也去<u>方便</u>一下。等一下可以吃到真正的大餐。失陪。

竹高：你也去<u>方便</u>？

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Mrs. Zheng: You two, why don't you eat?

Zhugao: I need <u>convenience</u>.

Pangying: I thought that I could eat the little monster king if I paid 300 <u>taels</u> more?

Qianhu Ge: Today, everyone has the luck to eat. Little monster king is a newly added dish. It is being prepared in the kitchen.

Guests: So good.

Pangying: That's great. I also need <u>convenience</u>. I can have the big dish in a short while. Excuse me.

Zhugao: You also need <u>convenience</u>?

English subtitles

Mrs. Zheng: Why don't you two eat?

Zhugao: I have to go to the restroom. Restroom, restroom.

Pangying: I thought we will have the little monster king … since we paid 300 taels more?

Qianhu Ge: Today, you all are lucky! Little monster king is a newly added dish. We've been preparing it in the kitchen.

Guests: Fantastic!

Pangying: That's great. I also need to go to the restroom…before we try the special dish. Excuse me.

Zhugao: We are such a team.

Screenshots

Figure 6.10 Author's screenshot depicting the character Zhugao's hesitant and scared facial expressions (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.11 Author's screenshot depicting other guests' reaction to Ying in terms of eating the monster dish (Monster hunt 2015).

Analysis

Humour in the Chinese original is, by and large, generated by the key word "restroom". Repetition is employed to underline Zhugao's urgent need to go to the toilet and triggers toilet humour. Elicitation of humour is particularly dependent on the characters' bizarre behaviour and flimsy excuse as they refuse to try the new dish. The very reason for attending this banquet is to taste the monster dish. The female monster, Pangying, says "I thought we will have the little monster king… since we paid 300 taels more". Exaggeration is used to emphasise the great luxury of the monster meal. However, unlike the other guests, who taste and enjoy the monster dish, the monster couple refuse to eat it. Their behaviour attracts Mrs.

Zheng's attention and triggers queries.[117] The couple comically continue to use their need for the toilet as a pretext not to try the monster dish. The verbal humour is contradicted by the kinesic actions and paralanguage. Figure 6.10 shows that as Zhugao stares at the monster dish, he looks awkward, hesitant, even scared. Humour is created by the interplay of the verbal mode and non-verbal modes (kinesic actions and paralanguage), which contradict each other. To humorous effect, the contradictory modes disclose Zhugao's real, hidden desperation to avoid trying the monster delicacy.

Humour is also located in the incongruity between the female monster's remarks and her paralanguage. According to Morreall, "When we experience something… that violates our expectations, we laugh" (1987, p.130). This is what causes some of the humour in this example. Specifically, the repetitive use of the need to go to the toilet as an excuse not to eat the monster dish clashes with the expectation of other guests who are keen to tuck in to the delicacy. What really surprises the other guests is the contradiction between the female monster's remarks and her kinesic actions (Figure 6.11). As soon as Pangying confirms that she can eat the newly added dish (the little monster king), she looks happy and claims "That's great". Comedy stems from that fact that, in stark contrast to her remark, she suddenly stands up and leaves the table. This is quite the opposite of the audience's expectation. The diners around her look astonished.

In the Chinese original of the excuse "I have to go to the restroom", it is noteworthy that the euphemistic word "convenience" (方便, *fangbian*) is used as a substitute for the phrase "go to the toilet". This occurs in both the Chinese dialogue and the subtitles. This is a rational and effective strategy to avoid the taboo word 'toilet' in Chinese. Referring to going to the toilet is impolite and inappropriate, and might even offend the other guests while they are eating. The word 'toilet' is taboo in Chinese culture because of its close relationship with bodily functions, which echoes Yun's view that "all cultures and societies have a strong tendency to place a taboo on terms for these biological and physiological phenomena" (2016, p.380). In Chinese daily life, "I need convenience" is used to convey the need to go to the toilet without actually using the word for it.

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[117] Mrs. Zheng is another guest at the restaurant.

The humour in this scene stems from toilet humour and the Chinese audience's understanding of the cultural word "convenience" in this particular context. It is notable that the Chinese cultural word "convenience" is repeated five times in this scene. It is not problematic to render this as 'toilet' in the TL. However, the subtitler translates it with the euphemistic word "restroom" and then "team". This not only avoids any ambiguous meaning of "convenience", but also any embarrassment about the word 'toilet'. It also more specifically targets the film at a North American audience where the euphemistic "restroom" is more frequently used than 'toilet', a word that is more common in UK usage. Rather than translating "You also need convenience" as 'You are going to the restroom', the subtitler takes the context into consideration and translates it as "We are such a team". This strategy of addition expands the denotative sense of "convenience" ("team"), and echoes the visual images (the monster couple high-five each other to show their tacit agreement in refusing the monster dish and reinforce the utterance 'We are such a team'). This underlines the fact that subtitles can combine the visual mode and verbal mode to convey a better understanding of cultural humour to the TL audience.

To summarise, humour is maintained in the English subtitles through the use of strategies of dynamic equivalence and addition to deal with the translation of cultural humour and situational humour. As 'toilet' is substituted by the euphemism "convenience" in the SL, the TL subtitles also avoid the taboo word. This has a humorous effect because the couple can verbalise neither their true desire to avoid the dish nor the true function of the room to which they are seeking to escape. Additionally, verbal and non-verbal modes integrate to transfer humour from the SL to the TL. This example shows that humour depends chiefly on the verbal mode ("convenience") and the situational context, which means that the verbal mode predominates over other modes in transferring humour. However, the verbal humour is also reinforced by contradiction from the non-verbal modes embodied in the characters' kinesic actions.

6.4.3   Non-verbal humour

This section examines two subcategories of humour in *Monster Hunt* that fall under the classification of non-verbal humour: surreal humour and physical humour.

6.4.3.1 Surreal humour

Surreal humour concerns extremely bizarre objects, phenomena and experiences unconnected with real life.

Example

Example background

Tianyin, the hero of the film, is giving birth to a baby monster.

Chinese lines (Subtitles)

天荫：我不生了。

小岚：生啊，生啊。使劲儿啊。

郑夫人：是霍姑娘吗？你没事（儿）吧？

小岚：我没事（儿）。有人来了，马上生出来。快点。

∘∘∘∘∘∘

郑夫人：不好意思，我真的是太兴奋了。

小岚：你生了个萝卜。

天荫：给我看看。

小岚：小心，妖天性狡猾。

天荫：像我吗？

小岚：像。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Tianyin: I don't want to go through childbirth any more.

Xiaolan: You do, you do. Put in more strength.

Mrs. Zheng: Is that Miss Huo? Are you okay?

Xiaolan: I'm fine. Thanks. Someone is coming. Labouring it, be quick!

…

Mrs. Zheng: Excuse me, I'm just too excited.

Xiaolan: You gave birth to a mooli.

Tianyin: Let me see!

Xiaolan: Be careful. A monster is born to be cunning.

Tianyin: Does it look like me?

Xiaolan: Yes.

English subtitles

Tianyin: I give up. I give up!

Xiaolan: Push, push! Push harder!

Mrs. Zheng: Is it Miss Huo? Are you okay?

Xiaolan: I'm fine. Thanks. Someone is outside. Let it out now! Quick!

…

Mrs. Zheng: Excuse me, I'm just too excited.

Xiaolan: You gave birth to a white radish!

Tianyin: Let me see!

Xiaolan: Be careful. A monster is monster.

Tianyin: Does it look like me?

Xiaolan: Sure.

Screenshots

Figure 6.12 Author's screenshot depicting the character Xiaolan looking worried (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.13 Author's screenshot depicting Tianyin giving birth to a baby monster (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.14 Author's screenshot depicting the character Mrs. Zheng's astonished facial expression (Monster hunt 2015).
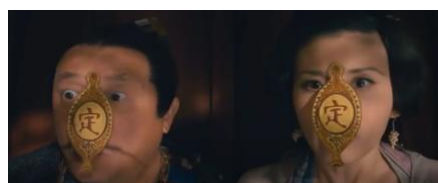
Figure 6.15 Author's screenshot depicting the monster couple looking astonished (Monster hunt 2015).
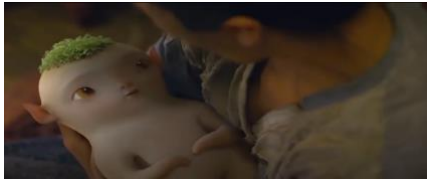
Figure 6.16 Author's screenshot depicting the character Tianyin holding his baby monster in his arms (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.17 Author's screenshot depicting the character Xiaolan's tight smile (Monster hunt 2015).

Analysis

Humour in this instance derives from the complete absurdity of a man giving birth to a baby monster. This subversion of a man's traditional role also subverts social convention and common sense. Men physically cannot give birth. Humour is also created by the dramatic contrast between Tianyin's behaviour and Xiaolan's during the delivery. The hero, Tianyin, is of course suffering labour pains. He behaves in a spoiled manner and says repeatedly "I give up" in order to attract Xiaolan's attention. Meanwhile, his female counterpart, Xiaolan, fails to offer any comfort or calm him down. Instead, her loud voice, angry looks and rudeness contradict the expectations of virtuous behaviour applied to Chinese women. Wu points out "Chinese women's attitude towards men is always quite gentle" (2006, p.195). The surreal humour in this example taps into the ongoing debates about equality between men and women in China, which have been discussed in previous chapters.

The non-verbal modes during the birth process highlight the ridiculousness of the situation. They are essential to the surreal humour. A constant strange noise while Tianyin is in labour attracts Mrs. Zheng's attention, and she asks Xiaolan whether everything is OK. Xiaolan is

annoyed by the interruption (Figure 6.12). Consequently, she commands Tianyin to give birth faster to avoid anyone discovering that a man is delivering a baby monster. However, Xiaolan's reassurance that things are fine does not prevent Mrs. Zheng from entering the room and starting a conversation with Xiaolan. Humour also results from the bizarre way in which the child is delivered. As Figure 6.13 shows, the newborn baby monster comes out of Tianyin's mouth. The absurd humour is reinforced by the exaggerated expressions of shock on the other characters' faces (Figures 6.14 and 6.15). The absurdity of the situation is underlined by the triumphal background music when the baby monster dances out of Xiaolan's reach. Tianyin's maternal reaction when holding the mooli-like baby monster in his arms prompts further humour. His beaming smile offers a stark contrast to the embarrassed and tight smile of Xiaolan (Figure 6.16 and 6.17).

The bizarre humour related to the delivery of a baby monster is fully transferrable to the English subtitles because of the universal genetic impossibility of men giving birth to a child. The interplay between different semiotic modes is integral to the humorous effect. It is worth noting that the line "A monster is born to be cunning" (妖天性狡猾) is transposed into the TL as "A monster is monster". Despite the fact that the English translation is not as specific as the Chinese original, due to the employment of generalisation, the English translation expands the semantic reference of "cunning" in the SL and underlines the fact that monsters are dangerous and vicious. The subtitler's choice to translate "I don't want to go through childbirth any more." "You do, you do. Put in more strength" (我不生了。生啊，生啊。使劲儿啊) into English as "I give up. I give up. Push, push! Push harder" retains the meaning of the source and functions as dynamic equivalence. Humour comes from words usually addressed to women being directly and impossibly addressed to a man. These kinds of utterances are well known to the audience in the context of childbirth and yet they are applied to a surreal situation in which a monster pops out of a man's mouth.

In summary, the surreal humour of the Chinese original is maintained in the English subtitles. Generalisation and dynamic equivalence are the principal translation strategies used to deal with this type of humour. Non-verbal modes predominate over the verbal mode in the process

of transferring surreal humour. Such modes are easy to translate for the subtitler as a result of the context.

6.4.3.2 Slapstick humour

Slapstick humour is physical humour which often uses props (Bouissac 2018, p.233) to express "actions, characters, and gestures in excessive or exaggerated ways" (Andrin 2010, p.227) through "graphic qualities, choreography, editing, and rhythm" (Trahair 2012, p.56). Slapstick involves elements of "violence, cruelty, ugliness, and destruction" (Andrin 2010, p.227). It is one of the easiest humour modes for the subtitler to translate because it is physical, visible and often transcends national contexts, as the example examined here demonstrates. This scene involves a violent fight between a monster and two monster hunters. Slapstick humour often depends on the human body (e.g. bodily appearance: silly faces, bodily movements: a man slips on a banana peel, bodily functions: unexpected flatulence) to create comic effects (Beck 2012, p.59). Bodily actions predominate over the verbal mode (language) in the process of creating this type of humour (Beck 2012, p.59).

Example

Example background

Xiaolan and another monster hunter, Gang Luo, fight over the baby monster.

Chinese lines (subtitles)

小岚：走。

罗刚：果然。这妖蛋是我的了。

小岚：罗刚，你又抢我的，还谈什么合作。

罗刚：是你骗我，小骗子。

小岚：你后面。你后面有妖，没骗你。

罗刚：你后面有妖，没骗你。

小岚：笨蛋罗刚，这小子死了，谁都没钱分，快来帮忙。

罗刚：我拉住，你收它。

小岚：辛苦你啦。走。

天荫：留下他一个人，会不会太残忍了。

小岚：他是四钱天师，应付得来。走。

罗刚：霍小岚。

Translation of Chinese subtitles

Xiaolan: Go.

Gang Luo: Just as I expected, this monster egg is mine!

Xiaolan: Gang Luo, you're robbing me again. How can we cooperate?

Gang Luo: You lied to me. Little liar.

Xiaolan: Behind you! There's a monster behind you. I'm not lying to you.

Gang Luo: There's a monster behind you. I'm not lying to you.

Xiaolan: Stupid Gang Luo. If this guy dies, no one gets the money. Come and help.

Gang Luo: I grab it, you capture it!

Xiaolan: You are working hard. Let's go!

Tianyin: Leave him alone, isn't it too cruel?

Xiaolan: He's a level four monster hunter. He can handle it. Let's go.

Gang Luo: Xiaolan Huo!

English subtitles

Xiaolan: Go.

Gang Luo: This monster egg… is mine!

Xiaolan: Luogang, you're robbing me again. How can we work together?

Gang Luo: You lied to me. Cheater.

Xiaolan: Behind you! There's a monster behind you. I'm not lying.

Gang Luo: There's a monster behind you. I'm not lying.

Xiaolan: Stupid Luogang… If he dies, no one gets any money. Come help!

Gang Luo: I grab it, you capture it!

Xiaolan: Thank you very much. Let's go!

Tianyin: Shouldn't we stay… and help him?

Xiaolan: He's a level four monster hunter. He should be able to handle it. Let's go.

Gang Luo: Huo Xiaolan!

Screenshots

Figure 6.18 Author's screenshot depicting the character Tianyin looking pained (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.19 Author's screenshot shows that the character Gang is not aware of the monster behind him (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.20 Author's screenshot shows that the character Gang is defeated by the monster (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.21 Author's screenshot depicting Gang staring at Xiaolan in amazement (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.22 Author's screenshot shows that the monster's teeth are knocked out (Monster hunt 2015).

Figure 6.23 Author's screenshot shows that Gang's face is bruised (Monster hunt 2015).

Analysis

Humour in this example is triggered by a sudden violent attack by a male monster hunter. Tianyin is pregnant with the baby monster, and Xiaolan is responsible for keeping him safe until it is born to make sure the baby monster can then be sold for a profit. Xiaolan's rival monster hunter, Gang Luo, also plans to seize and sell the baby monster to the highest bidder in exchange for a large fortune. Consequently, Gang starts a fierce fight with Xiaolan in order to capture Tianyin and the baby monster. Humour also stems from the double bluff in the scene.

Teahouses are a favourite venue for fight scenes in martial arts films because they allow the interplay of numerous elements (West 2006, p.93). According to West, "When the fight breaks out, tables are overturned, benches smashed and the teahouse is practically levelled" (2006, p.93). All of these elements are included in the scene in this example, although a wine house

is the setting. As Tianyin and Xiaolan try to run away, fast background music plays, increasing the tension. Gang chops the wood pillar of the patio with his broadsword to prevent them from escaping. The sudden fight plunges the wine house into chaos, and other guests and their pets are forced to flee. When Tianyin and Xiaolan try to keep running, Gang holds his broadsword to Tianyin's neck to prevent them getting away. Xiaolan makes quick eye contract with Tianyin, who gives Gang a sudden hard kick, making him bawl. When Gang is incapacitated by the pain, Tianyin and Xiaolan attempt to flee again. This heralds the beginning of the fight.

In this scene's fight between human beings, the action choreography concentrates on fighting techniques rather than employing acrobatics. Consequently, the scene provides the English-speaking audience with an opportunity to experience authentic Chinese martial arts. The fight includes a series of empty-handed martial arts techniques (fist-fighting and leg-kicking) ranging from striking to grappling. Hand strikes, kicks, punches and lifting the opponent are all used in the fierce combat. Interestingly, these martial arts techniques are consistent with the 'six harmonies', which means that the feet, hands, elbow, knee, shoulder and waist must work together to achieve harmony of movement (Kennedy 2005, p.12). The fight is performed at high speed, with movements in time to the rhythm of the scene's music. The choreography is also humorous. Tianyin is behind Xiaolan, and when she bends at the waist to avoid a kick from Gang, his fist hits Tianyin's face (Figure 6.18). Tianyin holds his face, looking pained. As the fight continues, Gang starts to get the better of Xiaolan. Gang's superiority resides in his use of the 'ba gua'[118] technique, in which attacks are conducted using a circular motion resembling a spin. His constant changes of footwork prevent Xiaolan from launching any successful attack of her own, forcing her to retreat. Gang's violent leg-kicking strikes Tianyin's leg, and he falls to the ground, his curved belly a reminder that he is pregnant. Excitedly, Gang exclaims "The monster egg… is mine" and lifts Tianyin up. To prevent her counterpart from being kidnapped, Xiaolan calls out "Behind you" and pretends to look frightened, convincing Gang that he is in danger. When Gang turns around to check, Xiaolan clenches her fist and prepares to punch him in order to save Tianyin. Gang sees there is nothing dangerous behind him, but before he turns back, Xiaolan makes eye contact with Tianyin, who covers Gang's

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[118] The core combat principle of ba gua is change. Circular motion plays a key role in this fighting technique because it allows the fighter to move behind the opponent and block his/her tactics (Kennedy 2005, p.10).

eyes. That gives Xiaolan the chance to successfully leg-kick Gang. Tianyin is saved and stands behind Xiaolan. When Xiaolan raises her head, she notices that a monster really is behind Gang. This time, her warning fails to convince Gang. He smiles, imitating Xiaolan's words: "There's a monster behind you. I'm not lying" (Figure 6.19). Humour is created by surprise in the sequence. Gang ignores Xiaolan's warning and is attacked by the monster (Figure 6.20). Laughter is triggered by his complacency and failure to recognise the truth. To save Tianyin from the monster, Xiaolan asks for help from Gang in saving Tianyin. However, the monster is so strong that Xiaolan is unable to resist its brutal attack, and she asks Gang for assistance with the utterance "If he dies, no one gets any money". Gang therefore flies through the air and uses a rope to try to lasso the monster. Gang believes that Xiaolan will help him to capture the monster. However, she leaves Gang to fight the monster alone and runs away with Tianyin. Xiaolan's use of deception to trick Gang leads to humour, which is reinforced by the verbal language "Thank you very much" (to indicate that the battle against the monster is hard work and needs considerable effort) and Gang's astonished facial expression. His eyes are filled with fury and he stares at Xiaolan in amazement (Figure 6.21). Gang prevails in his battle against the monster, but both combatants suffer wounds (Figures 6.22 and 6.23). The monster's teeth are knocked out, and Gang's face is bruised and scratched. However, the characters' miserable situation becomes the source of humour, as the superiority theory suggests that humour is generated when we feel superior to someone else's misfortune (Morreall 1987, p.140). The misfortune communicated by their miserable facial expressions is reinforced by the solemn music with which the scene closes.

The slapstick humour in this scene is easily transposed by way of the English subtitles. As humour of this type relies heavily on visual modes and kinesic actions, the subtitles play only a supplementary role in transferring the humour to the TL. Nonetheless, it is worth examining the translation of "You are working hard" ('辛苦你啦') from Chinese into English. The wording of this utterance in the English subtitles is "Thank you very much", which retains the full semantic content of the original. In Chinese, "You are working hard" can be used to express a compliment, obedience or modesty depending on the context. However, rather than emphasising the phrase's literal meaning — that someone is putting tremendous effort into doing their job — the translation in this scene focuses on its contextual function as an

expression of gratitude. "Leave him alone, isn't it too cruel?" is translated as "Shouldn't we stay… and help him?" in the English subtitles. The strategies used here are omission and specification. The English subtitles produce a neutralising effect and effectively convey a message that Tianyin is kind-hearted, thoughtful and sympathetic by omitting the adjective "cruel", substituting it with "shouldn't we stay…", and making it explicit that Tianyin thinks they should "help him". The TL audience's perception of Tianyin is altered by this translation strategy.

In summary, slapstick physical humour is successfully transferred into English through this scene's subtitles due to the interplay of different semiotic modes, in particular non-verbal modes. Non-verbal modes are the dominant contributors to the humorous effects in this example. However, the subtitles (verbal mode) are still important in assisting the TL audience in understanding the action of the fight. Equivalence, omission and specification are the translation strategies used to trigger humour here.

6.5   Conclusion

The complexity of humour makes successfully transposing it into the TL a highly challenging task. In order to offer a broad summary of the multimodal nature of comedy, this chapter has explored the translation of different types of humour into English via the subtitles of the Chinese martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt*, the translation strategies adopted by the subtitler, the interplay of different semiotic modes to engender humour, and how humour has been transferred to the English-speaking audience.

The translation of humour in this martial arts comedy reveals that, aside from the slapstick subcategory of non-verbal humour, most instances comprise hybrids of different types of humour: VEH (the humour of set expressions and wordplay, dialect humour, phonological humour and code-switching humour), Chinese cultural humour and situational humour, and surreal humour. Investigating the translation of these types of humour shows that dynamic equivalence is the most frequently used translation strategy to transfer humour to the English-speaking audience through the subtitles. This strategy requires the subtitler to emphasise the TL's linguistic and cultural aspects to provide the TL audience with a perception that is similar

to the SL audience's reaction to the original text. Other tactics that English-language subtitlers adopt in the process of translating humour are substitution, omission, generalisation, addition and specification.

The humour of Chinese set expressions and wordplay is partially maintained in the TL. The linguistic and cultural differences between Chinese and English pose the main challenges in translating this type of humour. Recreating the SL humour in the TL requires the translator to exercise creativity and insight. In addition to the challenges of language differences between the SL and TL, Zabalbeascoa (1996, p.255) suggests that extralinguistic factors, including the subtitler's attitudes, are crucial to the success of humour transfer in translated comedy. The verbal mode predominates over other modes as humour of this type depends largely on language. Given the multimodal nature of comedy, the interplay of non-verbal modes (facial expressions, music, kinesic actions, paralanguage) is also essential for the transfer of humour to the TL audience.

Due to the phonological differences between Chinese and English, it is not possible to transfer the SL's use of polysemy so its humorous effects are lost in the TL. Analysing the translation of dialect humour shows that this type of comedy is also lost in the TL because English-speaking viewers are unlikely to know about Chinese linguistic variations. While the dialect humour cannot be reproduced in the TL, non-verbal modes (facial expression, music, kinesic actions) compensate to a certain degree for the loss of the linguistic comedy. Overall, humour is achieved in the English subtitles, but it differs from the humour experienced by the SL audience. On the whole, non-verbal modes play a predominant role in the realisation of humour in the TL.

The loss of code-switching humour in *Monster Hunt*'s English subtitles is not only a consequence of linguistic flattening, but also due to the subtitler's assumption that the TL audience will probably not be able to decipher the differences between Mandarin and monster language. Consequently, the subtitler chooses foreignisation and dynamic equivalence to achieve humour transfer to the TL audience through the English subtitles. The interplay of different non-verbal modes compensates for the linguistic loss, enabling the translation of humour to transcend the acoustic channel.

Cultural humour and situational humour are fully maintained in the English subtitles through the subtitler's use of dynamic equivalence and addition strategies. The fact that the TL audience shares the same understanding of a specific cultural reference as the SL audience is fundamental in the successful transfer of humour through the English subtitles. As the humorous effect is effectively created in the TL, the verbal mode is stronger than non-verbal modes in the transfer of humour.

Finally, two subcategories (physical humour and surreal humour) fall under the category of non-verbal humour. Physical humour is fully transferrable to the TL because it depends on non-verbal modes, and the TL audience can largely perceive the humour from the film's visual content. Non-verbal modes thus play a key role in the translation of physical humour for the TL audience, but the subtitles still make an important contribution to the comedy. Examining the translation of surreal humour shows that its comic effects are communicated to the TL audience through the use of an array of translation strategies in the English subtitles, ranging from generalisation to dynamic equivalence. Surreal humour is maintained in the TL because non-verbal modes predominate over the verbal mode in the process of transferring this form of humour.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1   Research findings

This thesis has focused on the translation of humour in Chinese comedies into English via subtitles. Its three objectives have been: 1) to investigate how Chinese humour has been transferred to English-speaking countries in key case study films; 2) to assess the interplay of different semiotic modes in the process of triggering humour in key Chinese comedy case studies and in their anglophone subtitled versions; and 3) to explore the complex translation strategies used to subtitle Chinese humour into English in these films. In order to fulfil these objectives, this study has examined four Chinese comedies from different genres: the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008), the chick flick *Finding Mr. Right* (2013), the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (2010) and the martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt* (2015). Each of these films provides a range of different cultural and linguistic challenges for the subtitler. These challenges illustrate Chinese comedy films' importance as a corpus for subtitling studies more broadly. By selecting and grouping representative instances of humour from these case studies, this thesis has analysed different types of humour in the Chinese original and their transposition into the English subtitles. The concept of multimodality is central to the approach used in this thesis because subtitles should not be regarded as purely linguistic artefacts. Humour is multimodal, and the subtitled films in which humour is translated are multimodal too. Consequently, multimodality is key to subtitling humour and to understanding the complexities of how verbal and non-verbal modes interact to make us laugh.

This study's first original contribution to the subtitling studies literature is a more precise classification of audiovisual humour. This expands the existing classifications by introducing multimodality as an additional perspective not hitherto considered systematically in the field of AVT and humour translation. The previous classifications of audiovisual humour proposed by scholars such as Zabalbeascoa, Chiaro, Díaz-Cintas and Remael, and Martínez-Sierra are based on European languages and culture, and not all of their categories correspond to the classification of audiovisual humour found in Chinese comedies. This is because Chinese and European languages are dramatically different both in their linguistic structures and in their

cultural frames of reference. A case in point is code-switching humour, which is frequently present in Chinese comedies, yet none of the existing classifications of audiovisual humour capture this phenomenon in its full complexity. To address this gap, a new classification of audiovisual humour based on Chinese comedies was needed.

Inspired by the established humour taxonomies proposed by Chiaro (VEH) and Zabalbeascoa (national-culture-and-institutions jokes and visual jokes), the new classification of audiovisual humour proposed by this thesis considers both the verbal and non-verbal modes to be integral to the generation of humour in order to account for the ways in which humour generation works in Chinese comedies. The new classification of humour in Chinese comedies is hierarchically organised and contains four top-level categories: VEH, non-verbal humour, Chinese cultural humour and heterogeneous complex humour. Non-verbal humour is a new category to differentiate types of humour that were not considered separately in the existing classifications. To offer a comprehensive insight into the complexities of subtitling humour in Chinese comedies, this study has further broken down the top-level categories to pinpoint specific types of Chinese humour, providing new insights into the subtitling of humour in the Chinese context. Figure 7.1 visualises the hierarchical organisation of the types of audiovisual humour identified in Chinese comedies.
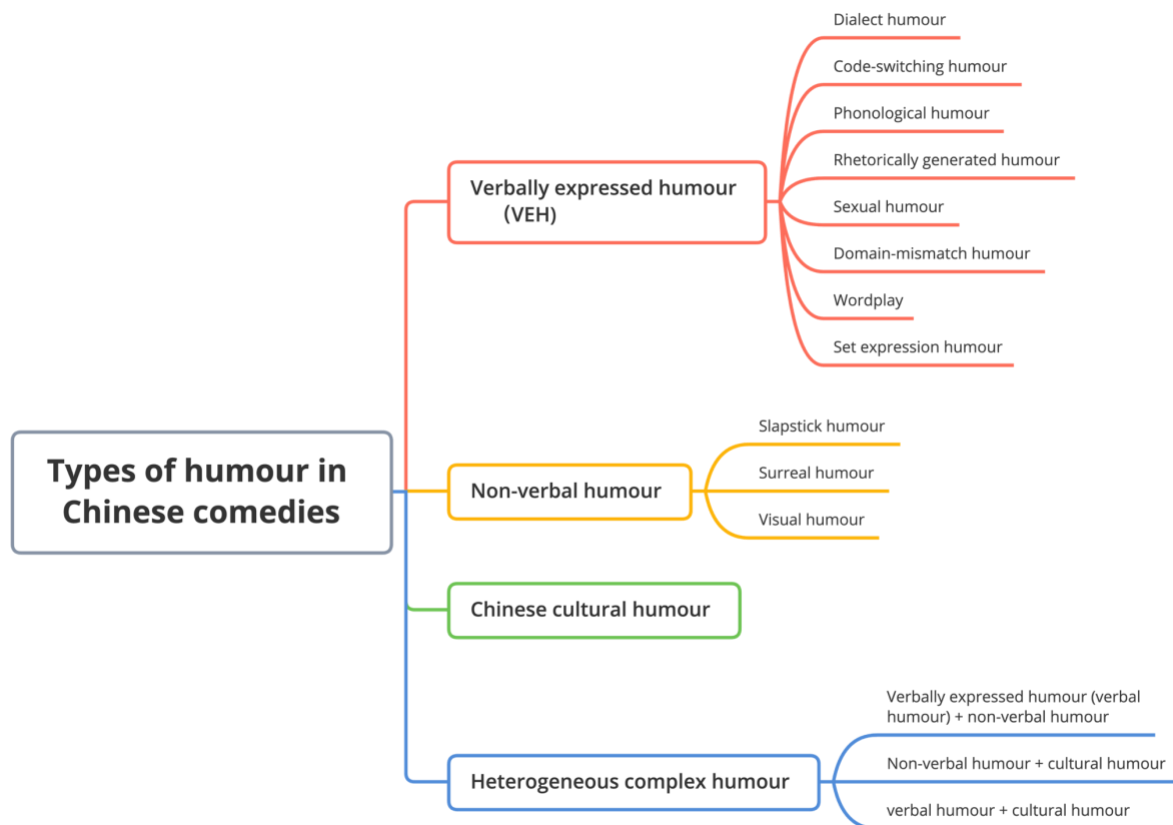
Figure 7.1 New classification of Chinese audiovisual humour and its categories and subcategories[119]

The first category is VEH, proposed by Chiaro, which refers to "Any verbal form of an attempt to amuse" (Chiaro and Piferi 2010, p.285). Humour of this type is heavily dependent on linguistic elements and wordplay such as puns, irony, polysemy, and homophony. Chiaro's classification highlights humour from a linguistic perspective, and much of the humour examined in this thesis is language-related. However, her classification is not systematic and explicit enough to encompass all the linguistic humour in Chinese comedies. She implies that any type of humour can be put into the category of VEH if humour is conveyed with a verbal or linguistic element. Consequently, adding more precise classifications (subgroups) within the category of VEH is both an addition to the knowledge in this research area and a useful tool to bring out the intriguing complexities of VEH in the Chinese context. The subgroups of humour that come under the category of VEH are dialect humour, code-switching humour,

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[119] Situational humour is not included in this diagram because it can be a subcategory of both VEH and non-verbal humour.

phonological humour (homophones), rhetorically generated humour, sexual humour, domain-mismatch humour, wordplay, and set expression humour.

The second category in the new classification is non-verbal humour – a key humour type in each of the case study films examined in this thesis. This study has illustrated the three subcategories of non-verbal humour in Chinese comedies: slapstick humour, visual humour and surreal humour. Humour in this category results mainly from non-verbal modes presented in both the visual and the acoustic channels, including facial expressions, kinesic actions, and background music. Prior to this thesis, this type of humour had not been discussed as a separate category in the existing classifications of audiovisual humour. Although Martínez-Sierra has highlighted that paralinguistic elements and soundtrack in the acoustic channel are integral and necessary parts of generating visual humour, his exploration is not fully developed. He does not conflate paralinguistic modes and soundtrack by labelling them as non-verbal humour. My classification does explicitly conflate paralinguistic modes and soundtrack modes in the acoustic channel under the label of non-verbal humour and considers them to be indispensable elements involved in the subtitling process. This classification clearly distinguishes non-verbal humour from VEH, the first subcategory of Chinese humour.

The third category in my classification is Chinese cultural humour, which is adapted from Zabalbeascoa's national-culture-and-institutions jokes. The term 'Chinese cultural humour' highlights the fact that this type of humour is closely intertwined with the Chinese context. Cultural references are of paramount importance in the process of transmitting SL humour to the TL audience. It is worth mentioning that there is overlap between the subcategories that come under Chinese cultural humour and VEH. Cultural humour can involve aspects of VEH because humour in both categories is often provoked by verbal elements. However, due to the complexity and widespread use of cultural humour in Chinese comedy, this thesis treats it as a separate category in order to yield a better understanding of why the translation of cultural references (Chinese set phrases, idioms and historical allusions) into the TL often proves problematic.

The fourth category of the new classification is heterogeneous complex humour, which is derived from Zabalbeascoa's complex humour, but involves increased precision. Instances of

heterogeneous complex humour involve hybrids of two or more of the different types of audiovisual humour identified in the Chinese case study comedies. The generation of heterogeneous complex humour usually involves both linguistic elements and extralinguistic elements (semiotic modes). The category also includes types of complex humour where different semiotic modes work together to trigger laughter.

By employing the concept of multimodality, this thesis has highlighted that humour is multimodal in polysemiotic texts, with comedy generated by a combination of different modes. It has also identified a special case of heterogeneous complex humour, which requires the coexistence of certain modes, each of which is indispensable and irreplaceable in the creation of humorous meaning.

This thesis has provided new insights for subtitling studies by pushing the discipline to go beyond the purely linguistic dimension. It has revealed the need to adopt an approach that makes clear the complex multimodal transfer involved in communicating Chinese humour to an English-speaking audience through subtitles. Subtitling is a multimodal translation activity in which the subtitles are only one of several modes contributing to the transfer of humorous meanings to the TL audience. Non-verbal modes provide additional layers of meaning in creating comic effects. Both verbal and non-verbal modes are essential elements in multimodal texts and often work together to generate humour. Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that "Any text whose meanings are realised through more than one semiotic code is multimodal" (2006, p.177). The case study films in this thesis and the Chinese humour they showcase are unquestionably multimodal. Hence, this study has not just focused on the single mode of subtitles; it has explored non-verbal modes, and discussed how different semiotic modes interact to trigger humour and how such interactions are translated multimodally. A film's subtitles (verbal mode) do not correspond exactly to its dialogue because it is a multimodal text. Humour stems not just from the subtitles but also from non-verbal modes. This means that subtitlers can work in a condensed form (e.g. omitting interjections and exclamations from the dialogue). The non-verbal modes can reinforce or contradict the verbal mode to contribute to the process of humour transfer. This affects the subtitler's choice of translation strategies, requiring him/her, when creating subtitles, to consider all the modes involved in the meaning-making process. Changes to the complex multimodal humour of the

case study films are inevitable as they move between languages due to the constraints of subtitling, and the linguistic and cultural barriers between the SL and TL. However, comic effects can still be preserved because non-verbal modes compensate to some extent for any linguistic loss, as the examples of dialect humour, code-switching humour and VEH demonstrate. This compensatory interdependence of the different modes that is common in film offers the subtitler opportunities unavailable in monomodal media. In fact, the analysis in this thesis has shown that less effort is required to achieve equivalence between the SL and TL if humour is communicated by non-verbal modes, such as visual humour and situational humour.

This study has revealed the relationships of different semiotic modes in the process of humour transfer from Chinese to English in the subtitling of its case study films, and summarised the hierarchy of different modes in subtitling humour in Chinese comedies. While the modes contributing to humour are hierarchically organised, it is important to note that the hierarchy of each mode in humour transfer is not static. On the contrary, it shifts from instance to instance and they are locked in a process of dynamic exchange in the translation process. Consequently, the hierarchy varies depending on the type of humour. This thesis has demonstrated that, in the subtitling of Chinese humour, the hierarchy can exist in five different states: single verbal mode, verbal mode predominates over non-verbal modes, non-verbal modes predominate over verbal mode, verbal mode and non-verbal mode are in balance, and only non-verbal mode. The translation of cultural humour is a crucial example in this respect. In this type of humour, the verbal mode predominates over non-verbal modes in producing comic effects if the SL cultural reference has a direct equivalent in the TL. This was explored in Chapter 6 with the example of "convenience" in the Chinese martial arts comedy *Monster Hunt*. However, it is often impossible to find an appropriate expression in the TL to directly replace the SL's cultural reference. In most cases, non-verbal modes take over from the verbal mode to transfer at least some humour to the TL audience. Non-verbal modes can compensate for the loss of cultural humour, as shown in the cases of "borrow arrows with a straw boat" (from Chapter 5's black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly*) and *Liaozhai* (from Chapter 3's romantic comedy *If You Are the One*). Although the transfer of non-verbal humour (slapstick humour, visual humour, situational humour, surreal humour) depends largely on non-verbal modes, this does not imply that the verbal mode can be ignored. Non-verbal modes do,

however, predominate over the verbal mode in these comedic contexts as they often rely heavily on the visual channel, facial expressions, kinesic actions, and background music. In general, non-verbal modes are often universally understood by both the SL and TL audiences in spite of their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, my case study films highlight how the two audiences often perceive different types of humour when VEH is transposed from the SL to the TL. For the SL audience, humour is often chiefly conveyed by wordplay that relies on culture-specific references, homophones or dialect. However, the translation of such humour into the TL is extremely tricky because of differences across the linguistic and cultural spectrums. More often than not, humour can still be triggered for the TL audience, but it is of a type where the verbal mode and non-verbal modes work together, with non-verbal modes playing the dominant role. This has been the case in the examples of phonological humour, dialect humour and code-switching humour examined in this thesis.

In its exploration of the complex issues involved in the translation of humour in Chinese comedies, this study is the first to apply the concept of multimodality to analysing a wide range of humour types in four different genres of Chinese comedy films. The findings provide clear answers to the research question in the first objective, revealing how Chinese humour is transferred to English-speaking audience in my case study films, despite the linguistic and cultural barriers. The review of the literature on the subtitling of humour shows that eight of the fifteen types of humour observed in Chinese comedies were not previously discussed in research on subtitling comedy in the Chinese context. These eight types are phonological humour, visual humour, domain-mismatch humour, sexual humour, surreal humour, slapstick humour, code-switching humour and acoustic humour. This study has used the concept of multimodality in detailed analyses of representative examples to demonstrate how these fifteen types of humour have been translated from Chinese into English subtitles. This has shown that effective transfer of Chinese humour to the anglophone receiving culture is closely associated with the SL and TL audiences having common knowledge of the same comedic references. If audiences share the same humour frameworks, the transfer of humour tends to be successful. This highlights the fact that non-verbal modes play a dominant role and in fact predominate over the verbal mode in the process of humour transposition from the SL to the TL. This is evident in the subtitling of surreal humour, sexual humour, situational humour and visual humour unless the specific instance of humour involves a cultural reference from the

Chinese context which is a lacuna for the TL audience. Translating certain types of humour poses a great challenge for subtitlers, particularly where humour stems from culturally specific references or relies chiefly on linguistic elements. The constraints (both spatial and temporal) of subtitling intensify the complexity of humour transfer. Effective subtitling of comedy requires translators to adopt appropriate strategies that both enable comprehension and create comic effects in the TL. It is significant that dialect humour, code-switching humour and cultural humour are widely used for humorous purposes in the Chinese case study comedies, yet the challenges of rendering such VEH in the TL mean direct transfers of this humour are rare. The translation of cultural humour is particularly difficult.

This study has shown that in the translation of cultural humour, strategies of formal and dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, omission and euphemism have all been applied. These primarily ensure the readability of the subtitles for the TL audience, but they are also used for comic purposes. It is worth stressing that the successful transfer of cultural humour to the TL relies on the interplay of various semiotic modes. Successful transposition of cultural humour would depend on communicating to TL viewers the requisite knowledge of Chinese culture that would allow them to understand not only the cultural reference itself but also its hidden cultural connotations. This study has shown that the difficulty in translating humour of this type lies in finding an equivalent reference to recreate the desired humorous effect in the TL. Cultural humour related to Chinese history is completely erased in the English subtitles, as shown in the example of "borrow arrows with a straw boat" from the black comedy *Let the Bullets Fly* (Chapter 5) and *Liaozhai* in the romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (Chapter 3). In the former, the subtitler adopts a translation strategy of formal equivalence. The latter employs omission and substitution of the SL's cultural reference with an idiomatic expression from the TL. Although some transfer of humour to the TL audience is achieved, the humour is different from that experienced by the SL audience because non-verbal modes compensate for the loss of the original's cultural humour. Cultural humour is only partially retained in the TL, as demonstrated by the examples of "soft persimmon" and "as ferocious as wolves and tigers" in the romantic comedy in Chapter 3. Humour is replicated by using the strategies of cultural substitution (domestication) and dynamic equivalence, which involve the replacement or removal of the SL's culturally specific reference to accommodate the target culture's norms. As a result, Chinese and English-speaking audiences have different

perceptions of the same instance of humour. Humour in the Chinese original depends on the audience's familiarity with the connotations of the cultural reference, whereas English-speaking audiences are arguably more likely to appreciate the humour thanks to the contextual information embedded in the subtitles. Non-verbal modes offer an additional layer of meaning and can work together with the verbal mode (subtitles) to contribute to the humorous effect in the TL. Conversely, in some cases, the overall transfer of humour works perfectly in the TL, as shown by the example of "convenience" in the martial arts comedy (Chapter 6). Here, the SL and TL audiences share the same understanding of the cultural reference to everyday customs, and appropriate translation strategies (dynamic equivalence and euphemism) are effectively used.

In its thorough discussion of the translation strategies the subtitlers applied to the case study films to translate different types of humour in Chinese comedies, this thesis fulfils its third research objective. By doing so, it facilitates a better comprehension of the transfer of Chinese humour to English-speaking audiences. This study has identified eleven strategies in the case study films that deal with the translation of Chinese humour into English: formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, addition, reduction, omission, generalisation, foreignisation, domestication, euphemism, adding punctuation, and substitution. Furthermore, it has concluded that substitution, omission, foreignisation, domestication and euphemism were the most widely used strategies for the translation of Chinese cultural humour. Euphemism was implemented in the translation of taboo expressions to avoid offending the TL audience. Adding punctuation to replicate the SL humour in the TL when rendering a Chinese set phrase reflected the subtitler's creativity. Equivalence (formal and dynamic equivalence) is more frequently used than other translation strategies, reflecting the fact that subtitlers' primary task is to maintain the flow of the subtitles and simultaneously ensure comprehension. This translation strategy can be applied to most forms of humour, ranging from VEH to non-verbal humour, and even plays a role in the transfer of cultural humour. Formal equivalence is used when the humour in the SL resonates with that of the TL. However, the translation of humour into the TL works best when multiple layers of translation strategies are utilised. An important finding of the study is that more than one translation strategy was usually involved in dealing with humour transfer from Chinese to English, in particular in the translation of VEH and Chinese cultural humour. While subtitlers can only manipulate the transfer of humour

linguistically, because the humour in a film is multimodally generated, verbal and non-verbal modes interact to evoke humour. This finding reinforces the notion that translating AVT texts is an inherently multimodal activity and needs to be approached as such in theoretical terms.

Finally, this thesis is, to date, the only work to focus on different genres of Chinese comedies through representative case studies, and the selected films cover all the genres that are routinely exported to English-speaking countries. By taking this approach, this research provides a comprehensive picture of Chinese humour, multiple layers of translation strategies, multimodality and subtitling activities. In the case study Chinese comedies, dialect humour, code-switching humour and cultural humour are all commonly used to trigger humour. The comic possibilities of multilingualism are also exploited in several of the case study films. Unfortunately, the humour triggered by dialect in Chinese is so difficult to render in English subtitles that it is often lost. Code-switching humour is another type that rarely survives in subtitles. In the case study films, code-switching humour is always lost in the English subtitles due to the linguistic flattening that tends to occur as part of the subtitling process. Humour is most easily preserved in situations where there can be a high degree of redundancy in terms of how the humour is coded. In other words, if a number of different modes contribute to the humour, it is often of little consequence if the humour carried by just one of these modes does not travel from the SL to the TL. Dialect humour and cultural humour are also difficult to transfer due to the huge linguistic and cultural differences between Chinese and English. The more frequently these types of humour are used in the SL, the more difficult the transposition of humour to the TL is. This research has investigated humour translation in four different genres of Chinese comedies, all of which use humour as a vehicle for social and political explorations of Chinese society and culture. The TL audience's appreciation of this area of humour depends on their familiarity with the themes as they are dealt with in different genres of comedy. Overall, this study has not only used Chinese comedies subtitled into English to bridge the gap between humour studies and AVT, but also to fulfil its research objectives in a way that reveals the necessity of employing multimodal analysis rather than opting for monomodal approaches to the study of humour and its translation in audiovisual texts. Verbal and non-verbal modes can and do interconnect in the meaning-making process.

7.2   Future implications

As an initial exploration of the subtitling of humour in different genres of Chinese comedy films, this thesis has addressed all the research questions and achieved its research objectives. However, this study is not without limitations. Firstly, the scope of the corpus is limited to four comedies released after 2000, from different comedic genres, to explore how Chinese humour is transferred to English-speaking audiences. A future study could expand the scope of the data, and investigate other corpora of audiovisual products to determine whether the humour translation strategies explored in this study apply more broadly. Secondly, despite the fact that this thesis has explored humour transfer from Chinese to English by analysing each instance of humour using the concept of multimodality, it has not explored the factors which affect a subtitler's choice of strategies when dealing with humour in multimodal texts. Future research might examine how the interaction of different modes affects the subtitler's choice of strategies to translate Chinese humour into English. This could further expand understanding of humour transfer in the field of AVT. A third area of interest for future research relates to this study's treatment of the subtitling of humour as a multimodal activity. This study has analysed both the verbal mode and non-verbal modes and their interaction, and also assessed the hierarchy of modes as part of the process of humour transfer. Further empirical research could provide an in-depth analysis of how the shifting of modes within the hierarchy affects the process of humour transfer and the TL audience's appreciation of humour. Methods might include using a questionnaire or interviews to investigate how removing one or more modes impacts on the TL audience's perception of the subtitles. Audience responses could offer important insights into multimodal Chinese humour in film.

This thesis has explored the transfer of Chinese humour to the English-speaking audience, and its findings constitute an original contribution to the field of AVT because they propose a new approach to examining how subtitles work in multimodal texts, with particular reference to Chinese comedies. A consensus that high quality translation plays an important role in promoting Chinese culture to the world was reached as early as the 1980s when Chinese film directors such as Yimou Zhang and Kaige Chen won international prizes for their films (Jin 2018, p.199). Chinese filmmakers continue to export their films for a global audience, which resonates with China's ambition to promote its audiovisual products and expand its cultural influence globally through translation. China has embarked on various national AVT projects

such as the "China-Africa Film and Television Cooperation Project (2012)", "the Contemporary Works Translation Project" (2013) and "the Silk Road Film and Television Bridge Project (2014)" (Jin 2018, p.199). It has done so in order to disseminate mainstream Chinese values (Jin 2018, p.199). Globalisation is crucial to understanding Chinese films as an ever-increasing number of Chinese comedies are exported to the international market. This thesis has followed the global trajectories of specific case study Chinese comedies to highlight the complex, important, multimodal transactions which make their travels possible.

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Appendix 1 Filmography

Film	Release date	Director	DVD distributor	Subtitlers
If You Are the One	2008	Xiaogang Feng	Huayi Brothers Media Cooperation/Media Asia Films (BVI)	English translation: Chris Barden and Sherrie Liu (刘怡君） Japanese translation: Hongwen Zhang (张红雯)
Finding Mr. Right	2013	Xiaolu Xue	EDKO Films LTD	Sara Huang (黄迅）
Let the Bullets Fly	2010	Wen Jiang	Emperor Motion Picture (International) Ltd. and Beijing Buyilehu Film and Culture Ltd.	黄帆
Monster Hunt	2015	Raman Hui	FilmRise	许诚毅，许若端

Appendix 2 All sixty-six Mainland Chinese comedies exported to English-Speaking countries

Title	Year	Genre (IMDb)	Genre (Chinese Douban)	Director	Formats	Specific countries in which films were released
1.The Story of Qiuju (秋菊打官司)	1992	comedy, drama	drama	Yimou Zhang (张艺谋)	DVD, film festival	US, Canada
2. Keep Cool (有话好好说)	1997	comedy	comedy	Yimou Zhang (张艺谋)	film festival, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix), DVD	US, Canada, UK
3.Shower (洗澡)	1998	comedy, drama	drama, comedy, family	Yang Zhang (张扬)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada
4. Devils on the Doorstep (鬼子来了)	2000	comedy, drama, war	drama, war	Wen Jiang (姜文)	DVD, film festival	US, Australia
5. Happy Time (幸福时光)	2000	comedy, drama	drama, comedy	Yimou Zhang (张艺谋)	cinema	US, Canada, Australia
6. Big Shot's Funeral (大腕)	2001	comedy, drama	comedy	Xiaogang Feng (冯小刚)	DVD, cinema	US, Canada, Australia
7. Shaolin Soccer (少林足球)	2001	action, comedy, sport	comedy, action, sport	Stephen Chow (周星驰)	DVD, cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, UK
8. Father with His Twenty-Five Children (25个孩子一个爹)	2002	comedy, family	drama, comedy	Hong Huang (黄宏)	DVD, film festival	Canada, UK
9. Kung Fu Hustle (功夫)	2004	action, comedy, crime, fantasy	action, comedy, crime, fantasy	Stephen Chow (周星驰)	DVD, film festival, cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	UK, US, Canada
10. Mongolian Ping Pong (绿草地)	2005	comedy, drama	drama, comedy	Hao Ning (宁浩)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada
11. Crazy Stone (疯狂的石头)	2006	comedy, crime	drama, comedy	Hao Ning (宁浩)	DVD	US
12. CJ 7 (长江7号)	2008	comedy, family, sci-fi	drama, comedy, sci-fi, family, fantasy	Stephen Chow (周星驰)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	UK, US, Canada, Australia
13. If You Are the One (非常勿扰)	2008	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Xiaogang Feng (冯小刚)	DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada
14. A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop (三枪拍案惊奇)	2009	comedy, drama	drama	Yimou Zhang (张艺谋)	cinema, DVD, online stream platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada
15. Silver Medallist (疯狂的赛车)	2009	action, adventure, comedy	comedy, action, adventure	Hao Ning (宁浩)	DVD, film festival	US
16. Sophie's Revenge (非常完美)	2009	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Eva Jin (Yimeng Jin, 金依萌)	film festival, DVD	US, Canada
17. Let the Bullets Fly (让子弹飞)	2010	action, comedy, drama	drama, comedy, action, western	Wen Jiang (姜文)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, US, Canada
18.The Piano in a Factory (钢的琴)	2010	comedy, drama	comedy, drama	Meng Zhang (张猛)	film festival, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	Canada, Australia
19. If You Are the One: Love and Marriage (非诚勿扰 2)	2011	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Xiaogang Feng (冯小刚)	DVD, cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, New Zealand

Title	Year	Genre (IMDb)	Genre (Chinese Douban)	Director	Formats	Specific countries in which films were released
20. The Butcher, the Chef and the Swordsman (刀见笑)	2011	action, comedy	comedy, action, costume drama	Shan Wuer (乌尔善)	DVD, cinema, film festival, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, New Zealand
21. Lost in Thailand (人在囧途之泰囧)	2012	adventure, comedy, drama	comedy	Zheng Xu (徐峥)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	US, Canada
22. Guns and Roses (黄金大劫案)	2012	action, comedy	drama, comedy, action, romance, history, war	Hao Ning (宁浩)	film festival	US
23. Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons (西游：降魔篇)	2013	adventure, comedy, fantasy	comedy, fantasy, adventure	Stephen Chow (周星驰) and Zijian Guo (郭子健)	cinema, DVD, film festival, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
24. Personal Tailor (私人定制)	2013	comedy, drama	drama, comedy	Xiaogang Feng (冯小刚)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
25. Finding Mr. Right (北京遇上西雅图)	2013	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Xiaolu Xue (薛晓璐)	DVD, cinema, online streaming platform (Netflix)	US, Canada
26. Breakup Buddies (心花怒放)	2014	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Hao Ning (宁浩)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Netflix)	US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
27. Love on the Cloud (微爱之渐入佳境)	2014	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Changwei Gu (顾长卫)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
28. Gone with the Bullets (一步之遥)	2014	action, comedy, drama	comedy, romance, adventure	Wen Jiang (姜文)	film festival	US
29. Breakup Guru (分手大师)	2014	comedy	comedy, romance	Chao Deng (邓超)	cinema, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
30. Go away Mr. Tumour (滚蛋吧！肿瘤君)	2015	comedy	comedy, romance	Han Yan (韩延)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
31. Monster Hunter (捉妖记)	2015	comedy, fantasy	action, adventure, comedy, fantasy	Ramen Hui (许诚毅)	DVD, online streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime)	UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
32. Goodbye Mr. Loser (夏洛特烦恼)	2015	comedy	comedy, romance	Fei Yan (闫非)and Damo Peng (彭大魔)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
33. Devil and Angel (恶棍天师)	2015	comedy	comedy	Chao Deng (邓超)	cinema	US, Canada, New Zealand
34. Jianbing Man (煎饼侠)	2015	comedy	comedy	Chengpeng Dong (董成鹏)	cinema	Australia, New Zealand
35. Detective Chinatown (唐人街探案)	2015	action, comedy, mystery	comedy, action, thrill	Sicheng Chen (陈思诚)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
36. Surprise (万万没想到)	2015	adventure, comedy, fantasy	adventure, comedy, fantasy	Xiaoxing Yi (易小星)	cinema	UK, Australia, New Zealand
37. Hollywood Adventures (横冲直撞好莱坞)	2015	action, adventure, comedy	comedy, action, adventure	Timothy Kendall	cinema, DVD	Australia

Title	Year	Genre (IMDb)	Genre (Chinese Douban)	Director	Formats	Specific countries in which films were released
38. The Mermaid (美人鱼)	2016	comedy, drama, fantasy, romance	comedy, romance, fantasy	Stephen Chow (周星驰)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
39. From Vegas to Macau (澳门风云)	2016	comedy, drama	comedy, action	Andrew Lau (钟少雄) and Jing Wong (王晶)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, Australia, New Zealand
40. Mr. Donkey (驴得水)	2016	comedy	comedy, drama	Lu Liu (刘露), and Shen Zhou (周申)	cinema, film festival, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia
41. I am not Madame Bovary (我不是潘金莲)	2016	comedy, drama	comedy, drama	Xiaogang Feng (冯小刚)	cinema, film festival, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
42. Finding Mr. Right 2 (北京遇上西雅图之二情书)	2016	romance	comedy, romance	Xiaolu Xue (薛晓璐)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video)	UK, Australia, New Zealand
43. Railroad Tigers (铁道飞虎)	2016	action, comedy, war	comedy, action	Cheng Ding (丁晟)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, New Zealand, US, Canada
44. The Guardian Brothers (小门神)	2016	animation, comedy, family	comedy, animation, fantasy	Gary Wang (王微) and Paulette Victor-Lifton	film festival, online steaming platform (Netflix)	US
45. Cock and Bull (追凶者也)	2016	crime	drama, comedy, crime	Boating Cao (曹保平)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, New Zealand
46. I Belonged to You (从你的全世界路过)	2016	drama, romance	comedy, romance	Yibai Zhang (张一白)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	Canada, New Zealand, Australia, UK
47. When Larry Meets Mary (陆垚知马俐)	2016	comedy, romance	comedy, romance	Zhang Wen (文章)	cinema	New Zealand
48. The Monkey King 2 (西游记之孙悟空三打白骨精)	2016	action, adventure, fantasy	comedy, action, fantasy	Soi Cheang (郑保瑞)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Netflix)	UK, Australia, New Zealand, US, Canada
49. Buddies in India (大闹天竺)	2017	action, comedy	comedy, action, adventure	Baoqiang Wang (王宝强)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, UK, New Zealand
50. Kung Fu Yoga (功夫瑜伽)	2017	action, adventure, comedy, fantasy, mystery	comedy, action, adventure	Jili Tang (唐季礼)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	US, Canada, New Zealand, UK
51. Never Say Die (羞羞的铁拳)	2017	comedy, fantasy, sport	comedy, fantasy	Yang Song (宋阳) and Chiyu Zhang (张吃鱼)	cinema	Australia, New Zealand, UK
52. Our Shining Days (闪光少女)	2017	drama, musical	comedy, musical	Ran Wang (王冉)	online streaming platform (Netflix)	US
53. This Is Not What I Expected (喜欢你)	2017	comedy, drama, romance	comedy, romance	Hongyu Xu (许宏宇)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada
54. Duckweed (乘风破浪)	2017	comedy, drama, fantasy	drama, comedy	Han Han (韩寒)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada

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Title	Year	Genre (IMDb)	Genre (Chinese Douban)	Director	Formats	Specific countries in which films were released
55. City of Rock (缝纫机乐队)	2017	comedy, musical	comedy, musical	Chengpeng Dong/Peng Da (大鹏)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, Australia
56. Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back (西游伏魔篇)	2017	action, adventure, comedy	adventure, comedy, family	Hark Tsui (徐克)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada
57. Monster Hunt 2 (捉妖记 2)	2018	adventure, comedy, sci-fi	comedy, fantasy	Ramen Hui (许诚毅)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia
58. Detective Chinatown (Vol.) 2 (唐人街探案 2)	2018	action, comedy	comedy, action, thriller, crime	Sicheng Chen (陈思诚)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	US, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia
59. Dying to Survive (我不是药神)	2018	drama, comedy	comedy, drama	Muye Wen (文牧野)	cinema, film festival, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	US, Canada, Australia
60. The Island (一出好戏)	2018	comedy, drama	drama, comedy	Bo Huang (黄渤)	cinema, DVD	US, Canada, Australia
61. Go Brother (快把我哥带走)	2018	comedy, fantasy	comedy, fantasy	Fenfen Zheng (郑芬芬)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	Australia
62. Hello, Mrs. Money (李茶的妈妈)	2018	comedy	comedy	Yuhan Wu (吴昱翰)	cinema	Australia, UK
63. Hidden Man (邪不压正)	2018	action, crime, drama	drama, comedy, action	Wen Jiang (姜文)	film festival, DVD	Canada
64. How Long Will I Love You (超时空同居)	2018	comedy, fantasy, romance	comedy, romance, fantasy	Lun Su (苏伦)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	UK, Australia, New Zealand, US, Canada
65. A Cool Fish (无名之辈)	2018	comedy	drama, comedy	Xiaozhi Rao (饶晓志)	cinema, online streaming platform (Amazon Prime Video)	UK, Australia, New Zealand, US, Canada
66. The Monkey King 3 (西游记之女儿国)	2018	action, adventure, family	comedy, romance, fantasy	Soi Cheang (郑保瑞)	cinema, DVD, online streaming platforms (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix)	UK, Australia, New Zealand, US, Canada

Appendix 3 Transcription of instances of humour in the Chinese romantic comedy *If You Are the One* (2008)

Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 1	奋：那咱俩要是结婚了，非得倒插门儿我去你们那儿吗？不去不行吗？……要是咱俩不好了，能离婚吗？ 相亲女：我哥哥会打断你的腿的。	Fen: If we get married, I have to go live with your family? Can I refuse? … If it doesn't work out between us, can we divorce? Fen's blind date: My big brother will break your legs.	奋：那咱俩要是结婚了，非得倒插门儿我去你们那儿吗？不去不行吗？……要是咱俩不好了，能离婚吗？ 相亲女：我哥哥会打断你的腿的。
Example 2	奋：你给找的地儿吧？ 相亲女：颜春岭公墓。什么时候找什么时候在。 奋：那是，他要是跑了就成聊斋了。	Fen: You found him a spot? Fen's blind date: Yanchun Ridge Cemetery. Whenever I need him, he's there. Fen: If he runs away now, you should get your money back.	奋：你给找的地儿吧？ 相亲女：颜春岭公墓。什么时候找什么时候在。 奋：那是，他要是跑了就成聊斋了。
Example 3	奋：你不愿找一个结实的，身体棒的，非要找一个软柿子捏？ 相亲女：软柿子才好吃呢！ 奋：病秧子似的，年龄又大，你不担心婚姻的质量？你这个年纪，我直说啊，正是如狼似虎的年龄段儿啊。	Fen: You don't want a strong, healthy body! You prefer a soft marshmallow? Fen's blind date: Soft marshmallows taste better! Fen: But they're old and get sick easily. You're not worried about marriage quality? At your age… I'll be frank. You're at your sexual peak!	奋：你不愿找一个结实的，身体棒的，非要找一个软柿子捏？ 相亲女：软柿子才好吃呢！ 奋：病秧子似的，年龄又大，你不担心婚姻的质量？你这个年纪，我直说啊，正是如狼似虎的年龄段啊。
Example 4	奋：没期待您长得跟画报封面一样，看一眼就魂飞魄散。	Fen: I'm not expecting a cover girl to blow me away with your beauty.	奋：没期待您长得跟画报封面一样，看一眼就魂飞魄散。
Example 5	奋：人家没看上我，说我都跌破发行价啦。 笑笑：真可怜。这么大岁数了出来征婚，还老让人家伤自尊心。 奋：别猫哭耗子了。	Fen: She wasn't interested in me. Said I'd dropped below offer price. Smiley: Poor thing! An old guy trying to win the blind dating game and keep getting his pride injured. Fen: Spare me the crocodile tears.	奋：人家没看上我，说我都跌破发行价啦。 笑笑：真可怜。这么大岁数了出来征婚，还老让人家伤自尊心。 奋：别猫哭耗子了。
Example 6	奋：你呀，三心二意还真没那事，逢场作戏你都不会，全写脸上了，我把话放这儿。他这一页还是还没有翻过去，一旦翻到新的这一页，你照样会一心一意，我就是看准了这一条，才容忍你现在的表现，你傻我可不傻。 笑 笑：那要是我接受了教训变聪明了呢，你这如意算盘不就落空了？ 奋：那呀，明天我就把你卖给北海道的土人，让你一辈子伺候他们捕鱼狩猎，生一大堆孩子，风吹日晒风餐露宿风里来雨来去，食不果腹衣不蔽体，想逃跑，抓回来就是一顿毒打，三年就把你折磨成一个又黑又瘦，谁见了都躲的干吧小老太太。	Fen: You are incapable of splitting your heart in half! You're a terrible actor. Your feelings are written all across your face. Here's what I think. You're not over him yet. But once you are, Your heart will whole again. That's why I am tolerating your behaviour right now. You're a fool, but I'm not. Smiley: Then, if I learn my lesson and get smart, wouldn't it ruin your beautiful plan? Fen: In that case, I'll sell you to the local tribesmen first thing tomorrow. You'll hunt and fish for the rest of your life and have a slew of babies. Scorched by the sun, drenched in rain, and half-starving in tattered clothes. If you try to escape, they'll catch you and beat you. Three tortuous years from now, you'll be nothing but an ugly, repulsive, wizened old hag!	奋：你呀，三心二意还真没那事，逢场作戏你都不会，全写脸上了，我把话放这儿。他这一页还是还没有翻过去，一旦翻到新的这一页，你照样会一心一意，我就是看准了这一条，才容忍你现在的表现，你傻我可不傻。 笑笑：那要是我接受了教训变聪明了呢，你这如意算盘不就落空了？ 秦奋：那呀，明天我就把你卖给北海道的土人，让你一辈子伺候他们捕鱼狩猎，生一大堆孩子，风吹日晒风餐露宿风里来雨来去，食不果腹衣不蔽体，想逃跑，抓回来就是一顿毒打，三年就把你折磨成一个又黑又瘦，谁见了都躲的干吧小老太太。
Example 7	范先生：你看看我们是说英文呢，还是说中文呢？ 奋：您定。您说哪个顺口说哪个，我都行。 范先生：那还是说母语吧。Nice to meet you. 奋：说母语？ 范先生：哎呀，你看看我，这个经常不说母语已经不习惯了。见到你非常高兴，幸会。	Mr. Fan: Shall we speak English or Chinese? Fen: Your decision, whichever is more natural. Mr. Fan: Then let's use our mother tongue. Nice to meet you. Fen: Our mother tongue? Mr. Fan: Oops. Look at me. So used to English, I forget my own language. So nice to meet you. A pleasure.	范先生：你看看我们是说英文呢，还是说中文呢？ 奋：您定。您说哪个顺口说哪个，我都行。 范先生：那还是说母语吧。见到你很高兴。 奋：说母语？ 范先生：哎呀，你看看我，这个经常不说母语已经不习惯了。见到你非常高兴，幸会。
Example 8	范先生：开个价吧！ 奋：二百万吧！ 范先生：一百万。 奋：二百万。 范先生：一百万。 奋：要不这样吧，它说了算。 范先生：Good idea. 奋：锤子、剪子、布。好了吗？ 范先生：好了。 奋：一、二、三。 范先生：妥了。愿赌服输，成交。 奋：我说的是美元。 范先生：少废话，我说的是英镑。	Mr. Fan: Name a price. Fen: Two million. Mr. Fan: One million. Fen: Two million. Mr. Fan: One million. Fen: Ok, we can do this. Let the CRT 2008 decide. Mr. Fan: Good idea. Fen: Rock. Paper. Scissors. Are you ready? Mr. Fan: Yes. Fen: One, two, three. Mr. Fan: Resolved. You got yourself a deal. Fen: I meant US dollars. Mr. Fan: I meant Sterling.	范先生：开个价吧！ 奋：二百万吧！ 范先生：一百万。 奋：二百万。 范先生：一百万。 奋：要不这样吧，它说了算。 范先生：好主意。 奋：锤子、剪子、布。好了吗？ 范先生：好了。 奋：一、二、三。 范先生：妥了，愿赌服输，成交。 奋：我说的是美元。 范先生：少废话，我说的是英镑。

Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 9	奋：你听我说啊，这是我卖给你的吧？ 范先生：嗯。 奋：是不是？ 范先生：是。 奋：我再给你买回来。你开个价。 范先生：二百万。 奋：你都要扔了，一百万。 范先生：二百万。 奋：一百万。 范先生：好，不争了。一百万就一百万。 奋：成交。 范先生：我说的是英镑。 奋：少废话，我说的是日元。	Fen: Listen, I sold this to you, right? Mr. Fan: Uh. Fen: Right? Mr. Fan: Right. Fen: I'll buy it back. Name your price. Mr. Fan: Two million. Fen: But you were throwing it away. One million. Mr. Fan: Two million. Fen: One million. Mr. Fan: Let's not argue. A million, it is. Fen: Deal. Mr. Fan: I meant Sterling. Fen: Huh, I meant Japanese Yen.	奋：你听我说啊，这是我卖给你的吧？ 范先生：嗯。 奋：是不是？ 范先生：是。 奋：我再给你买回来。你开个价。 范先生：二百万。 奋：你都要扔了，一百万。 范先生：二百万。 奋：一百万。 范先生：好，不争了。一百万就一百万。 奋：成交。 范先生：我说的是英镑。 奋：少废话，我说的是日元。
Example 10	奋：实话实说应该定性为一只没有公司，没有股票，没有学位的三无伪海龟。	Fen: Truthfully, I'm what they call a "Three Strikes" returnee: No company. No stocks. No degree.	奋：实话实说应该定性为一只没有公司，没有股票，没有学位的三无伪海龟（海归）。
Example 11	奋：但凡长得有模有样看着顺眼的，不是性冷淡就是身怀鬼胎。	Fen: But the good-looking ones are either hiding something or hate sex.	奋：但凡长得有模有样看着顺眼的，不是性冷淡就是身怀鬼胎。
Example 12	奋：现在学无所成，海外归来。	Fen: I slacked and learned a few survival skills I've returned without accomplishment.	奋：现在学无所成，海外归来。
Example 13	建国：你还记得有一次厂里组织咱们去十渡郊游，游泳的时候我脚抽筋了，是你救的我呀。 奋：对对对。 建国：当时你紧紧地抱着我，你一直安慰我，从那以后我就觉得和你在一起特有安全感，见不到你呀，我真的就想。。。。。。 奋：哎，哎，哎。。。。。。	Jianguo: Do you remember that labour union filed trip to Shi Du? My leg cramped while I was swimming. You rescued me! Fen: Right, right… Jianguo: I held tight onto you, and you kept comforting me. Even since then, I felt especially safe with you when we're together. And, when I don't see you I really want to… Fen: Hey-hey-hey!	建国：你还记得有一次厂里组织咱们去十渡郊游，游泳的时候我脚抽筋了，是你救的我呀。 奋：对对对。 建国：当时你紧紧地抱着我，你一直安慰我，从那以后我就觉得和你在一起特有安全感，见不到你呀，我真的就想。。。。。。 奋：哎，哎，哎。。。。。。
Example 14	相亲女：做母亲是可以为孩子牺牲一切的。 奋：爸爸也行。甭说是亲生的，就那些孤儿，我都想申请领养了。 相亲女：你真的对孩子这么有爱心吗？ 奋：有啊。你要是孤儿，我也可以领养。 相亲女：您真是贵人多忘事。我刚刚不是跟你说过，我爸爸在杭州开工厂的吗？不过你不要失望，我肚子里面也有一个，你可以当他的爸爸。 奋：你不是没结婚吗？ 相亲女：没有。可是我怀孕了。 奋：谁的呀？ 相亲女：那个男人我不想提。他都不要肚子里面的baby了。我不想小孩出生以后没有爸爸。所以，我想替他找一个有爱心的爸爸。我觉得你蛮适合的。 奋：这个嘛。 相亲女：你觉得我怎么样啊？你，我是蛮中意的。可是，你不是说你不在乎是不是亲生的吗？如果我们都不讲，小孩子一出生见到你，他应该，那不就等于是亲生的吗？ 奋：孤儿我是可以认的，父母双全就是另一回事了。宝马车头上插一奔驰的标，这恐怕不太适吧。 相亲女：能开不就行了吗？ 奋：可要是出了故障，奔驰的零件配不上，宝马又不管修。要不我还是算了，承蒙你看得上我，要不你再找找别人，我就忍痛割爱了。	Fen's blind date: A mother can sacrifice anything for her child. Fen: Fathers too. I would adopt one of those orphans even if it wasn't my own child. Fen's blind date: Do you really have such deep love for children? Fen: Yes! If you were an orphan, I'd adopt you too. Fen's blind date: Idealists really do have bad memories! I told you my father has a factory here just now! But don't despair. I have one in my belly. You can be his father. Fen: I thought you weren't married? Fen's blind date: I'm not. But I'm pregnant. Who's the father? That man is not worth mentioning. He abandoned the darling baby in my belly. I don't want the child to be without a father. Therefore, I'm seeking a loving father for him. I feel you're a good candidate. Fen: Well… Fen's blind date: So, what do you think of me? Fen: You I like a lot, but Fen's blind date: You said you didn't care if it was your own! If we don't tell him, and the child only knows you, he would be just like your own! Fen: An orphan, I can accept. But with a full set of parents? You can't just ipat a Mercedes Benz ornament on the hood of a BMW! Fen's blind date: But it will still be a good car! Fen: But if it breaks down, the Mercedes parts won't fit, and BMW won't repair it. I think we should forget it. I'm flattered that you like me, but I'm not the right man. I'll have to bite the bullet.	相亲女：做母亲是可以为孩子牺牲一切的。 奋：爸爸也行。甭说是亲生的，就那些孤儿，我都想申请领养了。 相亲女：你真的对孩子这么有爱心吗？ 奋：有啊。你要是孤儿，我也可以领养。 相亲女：您真是贵人多忘事。我刚刚不是跟你说过，我爸爸在杭州开工厂的吗？不过你不要失望，我肚子里面也有一个，你可以当他的爸爸。 奋：你不是没结婚吗？ 相亲女：没有。可是我怀孕了。 奋：谁的呀？ 相亲女：那个男人我不想提。他都不要肚子里面的宝贝了。我不想小孩出生以后没有爸爸。所以，我想替他找一个有爱心的爸爸。我觉得你蛮适合的。 奋：这个嘛。 相亲女：你觉得我怎么样啊？你，我是蛮中意的。可要是，你不是说你不在乎是不是亲生的吗？如果我们都不讲，小孩子一出生见到你，他应该，那不就等于是亲生的吗？ 奋：孤儿我是可以认的，父母双全就是另一回事了。宝马车头上插一宾士的标，这恐怕不太合适吧。 相亲女：能开不就行了吗？ 奋：可要是出了故障，宾士的零件配不上，宝马又不管修。要不我还是算了，承蒙你看得上我，要不你再找别人，我就忍痛割爱了。
Example 15	奋：你拉着这儿，把手伸进去。不是头，是手。	Fen: Hold it here.Stick your hand in. Not your head! Your hand!	奋：你拉着这儿，把手伸进去。不是头，是手。

Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 16	奋：你这不是跟我捣乱吗？我登的是一征婚广告啊？ 建国：人想见见你啊！再说了，你广告上也没说男人免谈啊！ 奋：那不是废话吗！我还能找一男的啊！我又不是同性恋。你是。。。。。。 建国：嗯。啊？ 奋：可是我不是。 建国：你怎么知道你不是？以前我认为我也不是，后来我明白了，是不敢面对，没有勇气。 奋：你呢，先走了一步，我呢，还没到那种境界呢！ 建国：那你为什么这么多年还不结婚？ 奋：没找着合适的呗。 建国：得了吧！也许你从心底就排斥女人， 奋：嗯嗯。没有，没有。我一直在检讨，心里那么大一地儿，为什么就装不下一男的？腾出一女的吧，你猜怎么着？填进来又是一女的。 奋：我问你啊！假如我跟你一样，我是说假如啊。我说错你可别生气， 建国：讨厌！ 奋：算了，我还是别说了。 建国：我知道你想说什么。在我心里呀，我一直把你当一大哥哥。 奋：那你还是把我当一哥吧。 建国：哥。皮肤真好，白。 奋：是吗？	Fen: Aren't you messing with me? Mine was a "looking-for-marriage" ad! Jianguo: But I wanted to see you. Besides, your ad didn't say, "Men need not apply"! Fen: Of course I didn't! Why would I look for a man? I'm not gay! You're…? Jianguo: Hm. Fen: Huh?! But I'm not… Jianguo: How do you know? I used to think I'm not too. But later I realised that I just lacked the courage to face it. Chinese subtitles: … Fen: You… are ahead of the curve. But I…I'm not that enlightened yet. Jianguo: Then why aren't you married all these years? Fen: I haven't found the right one. Jianguo: Give me a second. Maybe you despise women subconsciously. Fen: Oh…No-no-no! Jianguo: So you despise me then? Fen: No. Absolutely not! I constantly ask myself: Why am I so narrow-minded? With such a big heart, why can't I make room for a man? Whenever I clear a woman out, guess what happens next? Another woman fills the space. Let me ask you. Suppose… I'm like you…I said 'suppose' Don't be upset if I get this wrong. Jianguo: You're bad! Fen: Forget it. I better not say it. Jianguo: I know what you want to say. Deep down, I've always thought of you like a big brother. Fen: Then it's probably better that way. Jianguo: Brother. Fen: Yes? Jianguo: You have great skin.	奋：你这不是跟我捣乱吗？我登的是一征婚广告啊？ 建国：人想见见你啊！再说了，你广告上也没说男人免谈啊！ 奋：那不是废话吗！我还能找一男的啊！我又不是同性恋。你是。。。。。。 建国：嗯。啊？ 奋：可是我不是。 建国：你怎么知道你不是？以前我认为我也不是，后来我明白了，是不敢面对，没有勇气。 奋：你呢，先走了一步，我呢，还没到那种境界呢！ 建国：那你为什么这么多年还不结婚？ 奋：没找着合适的呗。 建国：得了吧！也许你从心底就排斥女人， 奋：嗯嗯。没有，没有。我一直在检讨，心里那么大一地方，为什么就装不下一男的？腾出一女的吧，你猜怎么着？填进来又是一女的。 奋：我问你啊！假如我跟你一样，我是说假如啊。我说错你可别生气， 建国：讨厌！ 奋：算了，我还是别说了。 建国：我知道你想说什么。在我心里呀，我一直把你当一大哥哥。 奋：那你还是把我当一哥吧。 建国：哥。皮肤真好，白。 奋：是吗？
Example 17	女士们，先生们！我们的飞机马上就要起飞。为了确保您的安全，请您再一次检查安全带已经扣号系紧，手机电源处于关闭状态。谢谢。 笑笑：你不知道飞机正在滑行吗？有什么事回头再说！ 奋：我是想提醒你，为了你的安全，请你也系好安全带。	Attendant: Ladies and gentlemen, we will take off shortly. To ensure your safety, please check that your seat belts are securely fastened and that all cell phones are turned off. Thank you. Smiley: Can't you see that we're already taxiing? Whatever it is can wait! Fen: I just wanted to remind you, for your own safety, to fasten your seat belt.	女士们，先生们！我们的飞机马上就要起飞。为了确保您的安全，请您再一次检查安全带已经扣号系紧，手机电源处于关闭状态。谢谢。 笑笑：你不知道飞机正在滑行吗？有什么事回头再说！ 奋：我是想提醒你，为了你的安全，请你也系好安全带。
Example 18	女士：我姨记性不太好。 奋：不好到什么程度？ 女士：当天的事儿还能记得，隔夜就全忘了。 奋：那事儿记不住，人记得住吗？ 女士：人也记不住。 女士：不过您别担心。重要的人和事她都会记到小本儿上。你们俩要真结婚了，她每天早上醒了，翻开看一眼就想起您是谁了。 奋：哎，姐姐！别记了。今儿的事儿您接着忘了吧！ 相亲女：刚才咱说什么事儿来了？	Woman: My aunt has a bad memory. Fen: How bad? Woman: She can remember today's events, but it's all gone by tomorrow. Fen: She can't remember things. What about people? Nope. Fen: Not even people?! Woman: But don't worry. She writes down all important events and people in her notebook. If you two marry, then she'll read it every morning when she gets up and recall who you are. Fen: Hey sister. Stop writing! It's best for to forget what happened today. Fen's blind date: What were we talking about again?	女士：我姨记性不太好。 奋：不好到什么程度？ 女士：当天的事还能记得，隔夜就全忘了。 奋：那事记不住，人记得住吗？ 女士：人也记不住。 女士：不过您别担心。重要的人和事她都会记到小本上。你们俩要真结婚了，她每天早上醒了，翻开看一眼就想起您是谁了。 奋：哎，姐姐！别记了。今儿的事您接着忘了吧！ 相亲女：刚才咱说什么事来了？
Example 19	奋：你问问他们有没有看到熊？ 吴先生：他们说进山的时候他们是四个人，出来的时候只剩他们俩了。 日本人：这儿怎么会有熊呢？这儿不可能有熊的。我们逗你玩呢！你真的相信啦。（日语） 奋：谁说日本人没有幽默感，也一点正经没有。	Fen: Wu Sang. Ask them if they've seen any bears. What did they say? Mr. Wu: They were a party of four when they started hiking. Now there's only two left. Fen: Huh? Japanese: How could there be bears here? Impossible! We were just playing with you! You really believe us?! Fen: Who says Japanese don't have a sense of humour? What a bunch of jokers.	奋：你问问他们有没有看到熊？ 吴先生：他们说进山的时候他们是四个人，出来的时候只剩他们俩了。 这儿怎么会有熊呢？这儿不可能有熊的。我们逗你玩呢！你真的相信啦。 奋：谁说日本人没有幽默感，也一点正经没有。

Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 20	吴先生：是不是可以把夏代和春子叫起来一起喝酒啊？（日语） 女服务员（夏代）：啊，我就是夏代。那边是春子，她是秋美。（日语） 女服务员（秋美）：我是秋美。（日语） 女服务员（夏代）：还有雪江。（日语） 吴先生：那么，外边的招牌上？（日语） 男客人：那张照片呀，可是四十年前照的。（日语） 吴先生：真的吗？（日语） 夏代：以前我们在东京是个很红的组合，叫四季（日语） 男客人：上她们的当了吧。（日语） 夏代：我们关系很好，一直到现在还在一起，看我们是四个美人吧？（日语） 吴先生：美人，美人！哦，是这样啊。（日语） 奋：四姐妹呢？ 吴先生：都在这儿呢？她就是夏代，那个唱歌的就是你最喜欢的春子。 奋：怎么都是老太太啊？ 吴先生：外面灯箱的照片是她们四十年前照的，四十年前她们是一个非常红的组合，退了休以后到了北海道开了一间居酒屋。 奋：那咱们走吧！ 吴先生：别、别、别。现在走多不好啊。没礼貌！你看她们多热情！喝一杯！	Mr. Wu: Can we ask Natsuyo and Haruko to drink with us? Staff: Oh? I am Natsuyo! And that's Haruko! She is Akimi. Waitress: I am Akimi. And Yukie. Mr. Wu: And… the photo outside? Male guest: That photo was taken 40 years ago! Mr. Wu: Oh, really? Natsuyo: We were famous in Tokyo! We were "The Four Seasons"! Male guest: You two fell for it! Suckers! Natsuyo: We stayed together all these years. Aren't we beautiful? Mr. Wu: Very beautiful! Now I get it! Fen: Where are the Four Sisters? Mr. Wu: They're all here. She is Natsuyo. Haruko, the one you like, is singing. Fen: But they're all grannies! Mr. Wu: They took that photo 40 years ago. They used to be famous then. They retired here in Hokkaido and opened this izakaya bar. Fen: Then let's leave! Mr. Wu: No! We can't leave now! It wouldn't be polite if we do! See how friendly they are? Have a drink!	吴先生：是不是可以把夏代和春子叫起来一起喝酒啊？ 女服务员（夏代）：啊，我就是夏代。那边是春子，她是秋美。 女服务员（秋美）：我是秋美。 女服务员（夏代）：还有雪江。 吴先生：那么，外边的招牌上？ 男客人：那张照片呀，可是四十年前照的。 吴先生：真的吗？ 夏代：以前我们在东京是个很红的组合，叫four season（四季） 男客人：上她们的当了吧。 夏代：我们关系很好，一直到现在还在一起，看我们是四个美人吧？ 吴先生：美人，美人！哦，是这样啊。 奋：四姐妹呢？ 吴先生：都在这儿呢？她就是夏代，那个唱歌的就是你最喜欢的春子。 奋：怎么都是老太太啊？ 吴先生：外面灯箱的照片是她们四十年前照的，四十年前她们是一个非常红的组合，退了休以后到了北海道开了一间居酒屋。 奋：那咱们走吧！ 吴先生：别、别、别。现在走多不好啊。没礼貌！你看她们多热情！喝一杯！
Example 21	相亲女：您觉得爱情的基础就是性吗？ 奋：不完全是。可是没有，肯定不能叫爱情顶多叫交情。 相亲女：您这我就不同意。没有怎么了？照样能白头到老啊。哦，我当然的意思也不说完全不能有。就是……别太频繁。 奋：那你认为多长时间亲热一回算是不频繁呢？ 相亲女：这是我的理想，啊。 奋：恩，你说。一个月一次？ 相亲女：一年一次。您要是同意了，咱们再接着往下接触。 奋：我不同意。我明白你丈夫为什么不回家了。咱俩(儿)要是结婚了，你也找不到我住哪儿。可惜了！ 相亲女：那事(儿)就那么有意思吗？ 奋：有啊。	Fen's blind date: So you believe sex is the foundation for love? Fen Qin: Not entirely. But love without sex is not love. At the most, it's only friendship. Fen's blind date: I don't agree. What's wrong with no sex? Many people grow old together without it. Of course, I don't mean to imply no sex at all. Just… not too frequently. Fen: Tell me, what's your idea of 'not too frequently'? Fen's blind date: Ideally speaking… Fen: Yes? Once a month? Fen's blind date Once a year. If you agree, then we can meet again. Fen: I don't agree. I know why your husband never came home. If we got married, then I'd be hard to find too. Too bad. Fen's blind date: Is sex… really all that interesting? Fen: Oh, yeah.	相亲女：您觉得爱情的基础就是性吗？ 奋：不完全是。可是没有，肯定不能叫爱情顶多叫交情。 相亲女：您这我就不同意。没有怎么了？照样能白头到老啊。哦，我当然的意思也不说完全不能有。就是……别太频繁。 奋：那你认为多长时间亲热一回算是不频繁呢？ 相亲女：这是我的理想，啊。 奋：恩，你说。一个月一次？ 相亲女：一年一次。您要是同意了，咱们再接着往下接触。 奋：我不同意。我明白你丈夫为什么不回家了。咱俩(儿)要是结婚了，你也找不到我住哪儿。可惜了！ 相亲女：那事就那么有意思吗？ 奋：有啊。
Example 22	奋：别的事我可以不劳而获，娶媳妇生孩子这事，我还是想自力更生，不接受外援。	Fen: Normally, I don't mind free lunches, but starting a family requires self-reliance. No foreign aid accepted.	奋：别的事我可以不劳而获，娶媳妇生孩子这事，我还是想自力更生，不接受外援。
Example 23	奋：小同志，我知道这是地面的事儿，不归你们空姐管，可是乘客的意见，你们也应该虚心接受认真向上边儿反映嘛！	Fen: Hey, young comrade, I know you 're not responsible for ticketing matters, but you should listen to customer feedback and submit our suggestions to you superiors!	奋：小同志，我知道这是地面的事，不归你们空姐管，可是乘客的意见，你们也应该虚心接受认真向上边儿反映嘛！
Example 24	奋：你要是弃暗投明想我靠近，我保证，就是张曼玉加安吉丽娜.朱莉加苏菲.玛索再加一林志玲她们姐四个陪我喝酒我都不喝。 吴先生：你不喝一杯，你喝十杯。	Fen: If you let go of the past and be mine, I swear that, even if we were with Maggie Cheung, plus Angelina Jolie, plus Sophie Marceau and supermodel Chi-Ling Lin, I wouldn't drink a single cup with them! Mr. Wu: Yeah right! You'd drink the whole bar!	奋：你要是弃暗投明想我靠近，我保证，就是张曼玉加安吉丽娜.朱莉加苏菲.玛索再加一林志玲她们姐四个陪我喝酒我都不喝。 吴先生：你不喝一杯，你喝十杯。
Example 25	笑笑：你征婚都征到杭州来啦，网撒得可真够大的。 奋：我也是有枣没枣打一杆子，宁可错过一千，绝不放过一个。	Smiley: You came all the way to Hangzhou? Really casting a wide net. Fen: Can't leave any stone unturned. Better to kill a thousand innocents than set one guilty person free.	笑笑：你征婚都征到杭州来啦，网撒得可真够大的。 奋：我也是有枣没枣打一杆子，宁可错过一千，绝不放过一个。

Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 26	奋：这回我是准备正经娶她当媳妇的，不敢轻举妄动。她这样的，心不给你身体就不可能给你。话说回来了，一旦她把心给你，你的身体就判了无期徒刑了。我还是趁着宣判之前啊自由会儿吧！ 吴先生：你喜欢她什么啊？ 奋：心眼实诚啊。 吴先生：得了吧，你就看人家长得好看。 奋：我就图她长得好看又怎么了，我为我们老秦家改良后代有什么错吗？非找一难看的啊？天天想着怎么越狱你就舒服啦？	Fen: This time, I'm serious about marrying her. I can't be reckless. She'd never give me her body before she gave me her heart. But then, once she gives you her heart, your body is sentenced for life. So, I should enjoy freedom while I can. Mr. Wu: What do you like about her? Fen: She has a good soul. Mr. Wu: Oh, please. You like her because she's pretty. Fen: What's wrong with that? I should deprive my children of good genes? Must I marry someone ugly? Spend my life trying to escape?	奋：这回我是准备正经娶她当媳妇的，不敢轻举妄动。她这样的，心不给你身体就不可能给你。话说回来了，一旦她把心给你，你的身体就判了无期徒刑了。我还是趁着宣判之前啊自由会儿吧！ 吴先生：你喜欢她什么啊？ 奋：心眼实诚啊。 吴先生：得了吧，你就看人家长得好看。 奋：我就图她长得好看又怎么了，我为我们老秦家改良后代有什么错吗？非找一难看的啊？天天想着怎么越狱你就舒服啦？
Example 27	相亲女：我的工作就是 炒股。最近熊市，没什么事做。偷闲给自己物色个老公。等牛市一来，不就没时间了吗？你炒股吗？ 奋：不吵、不懂。 相亲女：其实啊，我觉得这征婚跟炒股票是一个道理，你可以同时看好几只股票，最后到底买哪只就要看它的表现，冷静地分析了。比如说，长相啊，身材啊，比如说，性格，受教育程度，比如说，经济条件，家庭背景，再比如说， 奋：那我应该算一只业绩怎么样的股票呢？ 相亲女：从年龄上长相上看，应该属于跌破发行价的那吧！ 奋：要是没人看得上就有摘牌的危险了是吧？ 相亲女：那也不见得。没经验的人都喜欢追高，可追高的风险大啊，很容易就把自己套进去了。有经验的啊就会低价抄底，像你这种业绩不好的，一般人不敢碰、无人问津，所以呀，安全性比较好。都已经跌成这样了，还能怎么跌呢？ 奋：那像我这种低价抄进来的，你是准备长期持有呢，还是短线玩玩？ 相亲女：短线玩玩？你有那爆发力吗？只能尝鲜拿着，有当没有了呗！ 奋：那你要是拿了一阵儿，一直没有坚挺的表现呢？ 相亲女：你放心，我不会傻到只持有你这一只的。那总不能都不坚挺吧！我有太背了。 奋：我负责任地告诉你，我可不安全，你还是别碰了，一旦砸你手里，既不中看也不中用。到时候想抛 割肉你都抛不出去。从投资的角度看，我就算不良资产，我这包袱说什么也不忍心抛给你。咱们今儿就先停盘吧！ 相亲女：我也要看另一只股票，约的六点，你过去跟她聊聊吧！ 奋：现在大势不好，可千万别盲目入市，别急着进去，观望。	Fen's blind date: I'm a stock trader. It's been a real bear market lately, so I'm using my extra spare time to find myself a husband. I won't have the time, once the market turns around. Do you trade stocks? Fen: No. Don't understand it. Fen's blind date: Actually, looking for a marriage partner is like trading stocks. You have to make your decisions based on a rational analysis of his performance. For instance, the candidate's looks and physique. Or his personality and education. Or his finances and family background. Or… Fen: So…If I were a stock, how would I rate? Fen's blind date: Judging from your age and looks, you've sunk below your initial offering price. Fen: So I'm in danger of being delisted? Fen's blind date: Not necessarily. Inexperienced traders often buy high, but that's very risky. It's very easy to get trapped. More experienced traders buy low. A stock like you with bad performance? Most people won't touch you. Few would show interest. Hus, you're considered low risk. You can't go any lower when you're already at the bottom. Fen: So, for a stock like me that's bought low, would you invest long-term or just 'pump and dump'? Fen's blind date: Pump and dump? Do you have that kind of explosive potential? I'd just buy for long-term and hold it. Fen: What if you held it for a while but found its performance lacking? Fen's blind date: Don't worry. I'm not stupid. I'd diversify. They can't all underperform, right? No one's that unlucky. … Fen: I feel obligated to warn you. I'm very risky, so it's best to keep your distance. If you got stuck with me, and with me being useless and unsightly, you might never be able to get rid of me. From an investment standpoint, I'd be toxic asset. Only a criminal would sell me to you. Let's stop trading for today. Fen's blind date: I also have another stock to see at 6. Go ahead and chat with her. Fen: The whole market is down right now. So don't dump in blindly. Don't rush it. Just wait and see.	相亲女：我的工作就是 炒股。最近熊市，没什么事做。偷闲给自己物色个老公。等牛市一来，不就没时间了吗？你炒股吗？ 奋：不吵、不懂。 相亲女：其实啊，我觉得这征婚跟炒股票是一个道理，你可以同时看好几只股票，最后到底买哪只就要看它的表现，冷静地分析了。比如说，长相啊，身材啊，比如说，性格，受教育程度，比如说，经济条件，家庭背景，再比如说， 奋：那我应该算一只业绩怎么样的股票呢？ 相亲女：从年龄上长相上看，应该属于跌破发行价的那种吧！ 奋：要是没人看得上就有摘牌的危险了是吧？ 相亲女：那也不见得。没经验的人都喜欢追高，可追高的风险大啊，很容易把自己套进去了。有经验的啊就会低价抄底，像你这种业绩不好的，一般人不敢碰、无人问津，所以呀，安全性比较好。都已经跌成这样了，还能怎么跌啊？ 奋：那像我这种低价抄进来的，你是准备长期持有呢，还是短线玩玩？ 相亲女：短线玩玩？你有那爆发力吗？只能尝鲜拿着，有当没有了呗！ 奋：那你要是拿了一阵儿，一直没有坚挺的表现呢？ 相亲女：你放心，我不会傻到只持有你这一只的。那总不能都不坚挺吧！我有太背了。 奋：我负责任地告诉你，我可不安全，你还是别碰了，一旦砸你手里，既不中看也不中用。到时候想抛 割肉你都抛不出去。从投资的角度看，我就算不良资产，我这包袱说什么也不忍心抛给你。咱们今儿就先停盘吧！ 相亲女：我也要看另一只股票，约的六点，你过去跟她聊聊吧！ 奋：现在大势不好，可千万别盲目入市，别急着进去，观望。
Example 28	奋：你确定他肯定听不懂中国话？ 吴先生：放心吧！听得懂人家也不会给你传出去。 牧师：请开始吧！（日语） 奋：我要捐你们一千万，你接受吗？ 牧师：Do you speak English? 奋：十个一百万，很多的。 牧师：No English. 奋：给钱都不要，看来你还真是听不懂。那我就放心了。那我就从幼儿园干过的坏事开始说起吧！‧‧‧‧‧‧ 牧师：Excuse me, time! It's really… 奋：还早着呢！我插队完还有工作，工作完还得谈恋爱的事儿。早着呢！ ‧‧‧‧‧‧ 牧师：Miss, Miss, excuse me!	Fen: You sure he doesn't understand Chinese? Mr. Wu: Don't worry! Even if he does, he's not going to broadcast it! Priest: Please, begin! Fen: I want to donate 10 million. You want it? Priest: Do you speak English? Fen: That's ten times a million. That's a lot! Priest: No English. Fen: You don't even want money? Looks like you really don't understand! Now I can relax. I'll start from the bad things I did in kindergarten. Priest: Excuse me. The time… It's very late. Fen: I'm just getting started! After middle school, I have my countryside stories, then my career and my love life! I'm just getting started. Priest: Miss.	奋：你确定他肯定听不懂中国话吗？ 吴先生：放心吧！听得懂人家也不会给你传出去。 牧师：请开始吧！ 奋：我要捐你们一千万，你接受吗？ 牧师：您可以讲英语吗？ 奋：十个一百万，很多的。 牧师：不懂英文啊！ 奋：给钱都不要，看来你还真是听不懂。那我就放心了。那我就从幼儿园干过的坏事开始说起吧！‧‧‧‧‧‧ 牧师：对不起！已经很晚了。 奋：还早着呢！我插队完还有工作，工作完还得谈恋爱的事。早着呢！ ‧‧‧‧‧‧ 牧师：小姐，小姐，对不起！

Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 29	笑笑：这是一首励志的歌儿，怎么让你们唱得那么绝望？ 奋：四姐妹，加起来有三百岁了，能不绝望吗？ 笑笑：你带女朋友出来旅行，自己偷偷跑出去找人陪酒，夜不归宿，有你这么谈恋爱的吗？你这叫有诚意啊？ 奋：我这叫以其人之道还治其人之身。我都允许你心里有别人了，你就不能允许我的身体也开个小差儿。 笑笑：无耻。	Smiley: This is an inspirational song! Why do you two sing it with so much despair? Fen: Added together, those four sisters are more than 300 years old. How could we not despair? Smiley: You take your girlfriend on a trip but you sneak out drinking and don't come home. What kind of romance is that? You call that faithful? Fen: It's called "don unto her what she did unto me". I already allow your heart to love another man, but you won't allow my body to have a little fling? Smiley: You're shameless!	笑笑：这是一首励志的歌，怎么让你们唱得那么绝望？ 奋：四姐妹，加起来有三百岁了，能不绝望吗？ 笑笑：你带女朋友出来旅行，自己偷偷跑出去找人陪酒，夜不归宿，有你这么谈恋爱的吗？你这叫有诚意啊？ 奋：我这叫以其人之道还治其人之身。我都允许你心里有别人了，你就不能允许我的身体也开个小差。 笑笑：无耻。
Example 30	奋：心理健康 历史清白的姑娘都哪里去了？我怎么一个都碰不上啊？ 笑笑：你别拐着弯骂人啊！你就心理健康，历史清白吗？ 奋：我没说你，你不算账的顺眼的。用顺眼这词儿就低估你啦。你得算是秀色可餐，人潮中惊鸿一瞥，嫁到皇室去都不输给戴安娜的那种。有的人是情人眼里才是西施，不过分的说，仇人眼里你都是西施。别绷着了，笑出来吧！	Fen: Where did the simple, sane women all go? Why can't meet even one? Smiley: What are you trying to say about me? You think you're sane and uncomplicated yourself? Fen: Oh, not you. You're not good-looking! Calling you "good-looking" would be an insult. You're ravishingly beautiful. A rare, precious beauty. If you were royalty, you'd be up there with Princess Di. Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. But, and I'm not exaggerating, you'd be beautiful even to your foes! Don't hold it in. Laugh!	奋：心理健康 历史清白的姑娘都哪里去了？我怎么一个都碰不上啊？ 笑笑：你别拐着弯骂人啊！你就心理健康，历史清白吗？ 奋：我没说你，你不算账的顺眼的。用顺眼这词儿就低估你啦。你得算是秀色可餐，人潮中惊鸿一瞥，嫁到皇室去都不输给戴安娜的那种。有的人是情人眼里才是西施，不过分的说，仇人眼里你都是西施。别绷着了，笑出来吧！
Example 31	相亲女：我觉得一个男人要有责任心，孝心。就算钱赚得不多，只要父母亲需要也在所不惜。你诚实地告诉我，你是这样的男人吗？ 奋：应该是吧！ 相亲女：可是我觉得你不是。你爸的骨灰还放在那么小的一个小格子里。你妈要是也去了，难道让他们两个老人家挤在一个小格子里呀，清明节扫墓，你连个烧纸上香的地儿都没得，你说这叫孝顺吗？ 奋：我给他们买一墓地不就行了吗？ 相亲女：其实这也是一种投资，你只要储三万块钱，就可以买到一块皇家风水的墓地。三万，也就是你往返美国的一张机票钱，等过几年，同样的一块墓地，就可以卖到三十万。到那个时候，你再转手一卖，就可以赚十倍。 奋：等会儿，我卖了，我爸我妈埋哪儿啊？ 相亲女：你可以买两块撒，你买两块的话，我们公司可以给你打九折。	Fen's blind date: I feel that a man should be both responsible and filial. Even if he doesn't make a lot of money, he should take care of his parents' needs no matter the cost. That's what I call a reliable man. Tell the truth: Are you such a man? Fen: I think I am… Fen's blind date: But I don't think so! You keep your father's ashes in a tiny box! And when your mother dies? Are you going to squeeze them both into a little box? There isn't even enough room for incense and ghost money at the annual Ching Ming Festival! And you call your self filial? Fen: I'll buy them a cemetery pot then. It's not that I can't afford it! It's just that, when I Left China, only national heroes could afford a grave! Normal folks' ashes were kept in niched. So don't you worry. You find a spot with a nice view and I'll take care of it right away! And, if you and I get along, I'll even have your tombstone carved in advance. I guarantee you won't be stored on a shelf! Fen's blind date: It really is a great investment. Just 30,000 yuan will get you a grave plot with great, imperial fengshui. 30,000.00. Costing no more than roundtrip airfare to America. In a few years, the same plot will be worth 300,000! If you sell it by then, you would have made a 1000% profit! Fen: Wait a minute. If I sell it, then where will my parents be buried? Fen's blind date: You can buy two! If you buy tow plots, then, my company will give you a 5% discount!	相亲女：我觉得一个男人要有责任心，孝心。就算钱赚得不多，只要父母亲需要也在所不惜。你诚实地告诉我，你是这样的男人吗？ 奋：应该是吧！ 相亲女：可是我觉得你不是。你爸的骨灰还放在那么小的一个小格子里。你妈要是也去了，难道让他们两个老人家挤在一个小格子里呀，清明节扫墓，你连个烧纸上香的地儿都没得，你说这叫孝顺吗？ 奋：我给他们买一墓地不就行了吗？ 相亲女：其实这也是一种投资，你只要储三万块钱，就可以买到一块皇家风水的墓地。三万块，也就是你往返美国的一张机票钱，等过几年，同样的一块墓地，就可以卖到三十万。到那个时候，你再转手一卖，就可以赚十倍。 奋：等会儿，我卖了，我爸我妈埋哪儿啊？ 相亲女：你可以买两块撒，你买两块的话，我们公司可以给你打九折。
Example 32	相亲女：我爷爷就是北京人啊，我最喜欢听他讲话了，"这是怎么回儿事儿？"。 奋："回"不加儿因，"事"加儿因，"怎么回事儿"。 相亲女："怎么回事儿？"	Fen's blind date: My grandfather is from Beijing. I love hearing his accent. "What is go-ING on?" Fen: The accent is on the last word, not on the one before last. "What is going ON?" Fen's blind date: "What is going ON?"	相亲女：我爷爷就是北京人啊，我最喜欢听他讲话了，"这是怎么回儿事儿？"。 奋："回"不加儿因，"事"加儿因，"怎么回事儿"。 相亲女："怎么回事儿？"
Example 33	奋：你要想找一帅哥儿就别来了，你呀想找一钱包儿的就别见了。硕士学历以上的免谈，女企业家免谈，括孤儿，小商小贩除外，省的咱们互相都回失望。刘德华和阿汤哥那种才貌双全的郎君，是不会来征你的婚的，当然我也没做诺丁山的梦。你要是一仙女儿，我也接不住。没期待您长得跟画报封面儿一样，看一眼就魂飞魄散。外表时尚，内心保守，身心都健康的一般人就行。要是多少有点儿婉约的那就更靠谱儿了。心眼儿别太多，岁数儿别太小。	Fen: Looking for hot guys? Then don't bother. And no gold-diggers either. PhD's need not reply. Same for female entrepreneurs. Parentheses:except small business owners and peddlers. This is to avoid mutual disappointment. Perfect men like Andy Lau and Tom Cruise won't be looking for you here Of course, I don't expect to find Angelina Jolie either. Even if you were a goddess, I couldn't handle you anyway. I'm not expecting you to blow me away with your cover-girl beauty. Be modern on the outside, but traditional on the inside. And be both physically and mentally healthy. Slightly demure would be ideal. Don't be too young, and don't be too complicated.	奋：你要想找一帅哥哥就别来了，你呀想找一钱包就别见了。硕士学历以上的免谈，女企业家免谈，括孤儿，小商小贩除外，省的咱们互相都回失望。刘德华和阿汤哥那种才貌双全的郎君，是不会来征我的婚的，当然我也没做诺丁山的梦。你要是一仙女儿，我也接不住。没期待您长得跟画报封面儿一样，看一眼就魂飞魄散。外表时尚，内心保守，身心都健康的一般人就行。要是多少还有点儿婉约的那就更靠谱儿了。心眼儿别太多，岁数儿别太小。

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Examples	Chinese dialogue (lines)	English subtitles	Chinese subtitles
Example 34	奋：反正是张罗玩儿的事儿的，那时候是一小白脸儿，我记着你是一单眼皮儿啊，怎么成双的了？	Fen: Don't matter. You were in charge of entertainments! You were a cute little boy back then. But I remember you had single eyelids. How come they're doubled now?	奋：反正是张罗玩的事的，那时候是一小白脸，我记着你是一单眼皮啊，怎么成双的了？
Example 35	奋：你这不是给我捣乱吗，我登的是一征婚广告啊！ 建国：人想见见你啊！再说了，你广告上也没说男人免谈啊！ 奋：那不是废话吗！我还能找一男的啊？我又不是同性恋。你是。。。。。。	Fen: Aren't you messing with me? Mine was a looking-for-marriage" ad! Jianguo: But I wanted to see you. Besides, your ad didn't say, "Men need not apply"! Fen: Of course I didn't! Why would I look for a man? I'm not gay! You're…?	奋：你这不是给我捣乱吗，我登的是一征婚广告啊！ 建国：人想见见你啊！再说了，你广告上也没说男人免谈啊！ 奋：那不是废话吗！我还能找一男的啊？我又不是同性恋。你是。。。。。。
Example 36	奋：心里那么大地儿，为什么就装不下一男的，腾出一女的去吧，你猜怎么着，填进来又是一女的。	Fen: constantly ask myself: Why am I so narrow-minded? With such a big heart, why can't I make room for a man? Whenever I clear a woman out, guess what happens next? Another woman fills the space.	奋：心里那么大地，为什么就装不下一男的，腾出一女的去吧，你猜怎么着，填进来又是一女的。