

**Subtitling English-Language Films for a Chinese Audience:  
Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Transfer**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Modern Languages

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## Summary

This thesis explores the complex and intricate linguistic and cultural negotiations which take place when Anglophone films are subtitled for a Chinese audience. The project seeks to break new ground by offering the first study of subtitling in relation to thematically heterogeneous genres of films and different disciplines. This contemporary phenomenon of subtitling from English into Chinese thus provides a valuable case study for the discipline of Translation Studies as it does not straddle different disciplines but interconnects them. The project also provides new insights into the reshaping of English-language films for a contemporary Chinese audience and the ways in which the Chinese subtitles are mediated for their domestic agenda.

This project builds on Venuti's binary argument in relation to foreignisation and domestication and extends it to complex translational processes which sit at the confluence of linguistic, cultural, historical, political and commercial considerations. A new theoretical frame is generated to make a theoretical contribution to reading Chinese subtitles in association with different disciplines rather than focusing on translation theories in isolation. The Chinese subtitles reevaluate the complexities and specificities of British culture linked to the varied films and posit Chinese cultural values to shape the multidirectional facet of translation as much as the original source shapes its own. The study thus suggests that the hybrid dynamics of transformation occurs as a result of the various forms of transfer and the interaction between them: linguistic, cultural, political, historical, ideological transfer and the transfer of gender, sexuality, and humour. Through this transformation, the Chinese subtitling process allows for elements of British heritage to permeate the Chinese culture with the ultimate goal of enhancing China's own cultural values.

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## 1. Introduction

This study considers the authorised subtitling<sup>1</sup> of key case study English-language films into Chinese. Different from the fansubbed ones<sup>2</sup>, the official subtitles offer a stable body of work. They also underline an extra layer of cultural intervention in keeping with André Lefevere's (2002, p. 14) writing on the cultural institutions which shape the process of translation because the subtitles in question have not only been filtered through the Chinese translator's perspective, they have also been mediated by the government office<sup>3</sup> which oversees the films chosen for subtitling and the way in which they are subtitled. The thesis works on case studies from the genres of children's films, political films, chick flicks, historical films and comedy. The aim of this doctoral research is to explore the processes of translation, both linguistic and cultural, and to underline the complex processes of linguistic and cultural mediation which take place when these films are subtitled for a contemporary Chinese audience. This thesis also looks at the challenges of linguistic transfer between English and Chinese where different words/characters and grammatical structures interact. From a cultural perspective, this study examines how subtitles have to bridge the cultural gap between China and Britain. Finally, this project underlines the complex interaction of a multitude of translational strategies in the subtitles, strategies such as domestication, foreignisation, transliteration, neutralisation, etc. While translation theory is often written or devised in relatively isolated blocks that we thematise in terms of movements (the linguistic turn, the cultural turn, the functionalists) and we structure our teaching and handbooks about it in the same way, this thesis offers a far more dynamic vision of translation theory and identifies some broader cultural issues which this project can illuminate as the subtitled films in question borrow from various theories fluently, dynamically and cumulatively.

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<sup>1</sup>When I refer to subtitling/subtitles, I use the officially released subtitles censored by the Chinese government, rather than fansubbing translation provided by amateur/non-academically trained subtitlers.

<sup>2</sup>Fansubbing in China will be introduced on page 10 prior to the section of 1.1.2. The Critical Landscape of Subtitling in China.

<sup>3</sup>For more details about that government office, please refer to the censorship regarding the films which are imported, dubbed/subtitled and released in China on page 7 in the section of 1.1.1. A Brief History of Screen Translation in China.

This introduction will first present the theoretical development of audiovisual translation in the West and China, which is essential for the analysis of the linguistic act of subtitling. Following this, I will situate the project and its research questions within the subtitling practice of Anglophone films for a twenty-first-century Chinese audience. I will subsequently provide a brief explanation of the methodologies employed in this thesis to answer my chosen research questions. I will also outline the theoretical framework with which my thesis will interact. This framework is innovative as it merges translation theory with political theory, literary theory and criticism, humour theory and the theory of multimodality. It interweaves these diverse disciplines in order to make a novel contribution to the existing literature on subtitling by moving the focus clearly beyond the linguistic components of the subtitling process and encompassing the cultural, political and social components of subtitling. Before concluding with a chapter overview, I will outline the goals that this project seeks to achieve.

### 1.1. Literature Review on Audiovisual Translation

Despite being a professional practice which can be tracked back to the birth of cinema, Audiovisual Translation (AVT) experienced a significant lack of research until the close of the twentieth century (Cintas 2009, p. 1). It relates to “film, television and video media”, which is now broadly used to describe the confrontation of multisemiotic dimensions of broadcast programmes (Gambier 2003, p. 171). AVT modes, ranging from multiple types, could be understood as “the technical means used to perform the linguistic transfer of an audiovisual text from one language to another” (Chaume 2004, p. 31). To be specific, also known as *screen translation*<sup>4</sup> and *multimedia translation*<sup>5</sup>, AVT not only includes the major modes – e.g. dubbing and subtitling (Cabrera and Bartolomé 2005, p. 89), but also the latest types – e.g. audio description or surtitling (Cabrera and Bartolomé 2005, p. 89)

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<sup>4</sup> *Screen translation* includes distributed products by means of television, cinema or computer screen that have been shown on screen (Gambier 2003, p. 171).

<sup>5</sup> *Multimedia translation* covers wider categories ranging from theatre, comics, films, television, cinema, video and its on-line and off-line products and services, such as web pages, CD-ROMs, computer games, as well as verbal and visual dimensions of media (Gambier 2003, pp. 171-172).

as well as interpreting and voice-over<sup>6</sup> (Gambier 2003, p. 172). Among various AVT modes, most recently attention has been paid to subtitling (Cabrera and Bartolomé 2005, p. 94). Subtitling<sup>7</sup> lies at the heart of this research, and is defined as the linguistic practice that provides the audience with a written text on screen to communicate:

Subtitling involves presenting a written text, usually along the bottom of the screen, which gives an account of the original dialogue exchanges of the speakers as well as other linguistic elements which form part of the visual image (inserts, letters, graffiti, banners and the like) or of the soundtrack (songs, voices off) (Cintas 2009, p. 5).

In addition, an explanation of the different subtypes of subtitling<sup>8</sup> is necessary. In terms of linguistic medium, subtitles can be categorised into intra-lingual subtitles and inter-lingual subtitles. The former, also known as vertical subtitling, relates to the written text of the oral dialogue in the same language (Yu 2013, p. 56), while the latter, also known as diagonal subtitling, means a translation from a source to a target language (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 17). Both subtitling practices circulate in China (Yu 2013, p. 56). As indicated above, interlinguistic subtitling (inter-lingual subtitling), involving the transfer from one language into another language(s), is currently the most common type of subtitling (Cabrera and Bartolomé 2005, p. 94). Bilingual subtitling as a subcategory of inter-lingual subtitling, involving two specific languages, offers insights into the transfer of the source language into the target language (Cabrera and Bartolomé 2005, p. 94). This present study will focus on this bilingual subtitling, as its objective states, from English into Chinese.

To understand the situation of subtitling practice and this study better, a brief historiography of audiovisual translation is crucial in the progression of the present analysis. Laks's *Le sous-titrage de films*, a key work in the history of audiovisual studies, appeared in 1957. It was a landmark publication which underlined the academic worth of the discipline and offered a comprehensive overview of this technique. However, the

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<sup>6</sup> There are far more dynamic types of ATV modes – “free commentary, partial dubbing, narration, simultaneous translation, live subtitling, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, script translation, animation, multimedia translation, double versions, remarks and final remark” (Cabrera and Bartolomé 2005, pp. 96-100).

<sup>7</sup> More definitions of subtitling can be found in: Shuttleworth and Cowie (2014, p. 161) and Baker and Saldanha (2009, p. 14).

<sup>8</sup> Yang Yang. 电影字幕翻译述评[A Review of the Movie Subtitling Translation]. *西南交通大学学报 (社会科学版)* [Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University (Social Science)], 2006: 7 (4), pp. 94-95.

decades of the 1960s and 1970s witnessed little activity regarding subtitling. Frederic Varela (2002, p. 4) deems three reasons key to the neglect in this area of research:

- (1) The fact that Communication Studies and Media Studies (together with Translation Studies) are still relatively new disciplines;
- (2) the scarce prestige that the audiovisual translator's task has in academic settings, mainly due to the consideration of audiovisual translation as a lesser manifestation of literary translation (which has received much more attention though, paradoxically, it is not in great demand in the market compared with other modalities of translation);
- (3) the fact that audiovisual translation has been paid little attention within its own professional setting, in which the speed of the process, together with the wish to obtain short-term profits, and the number of persons which have direct access to the translation, have made audiovisual translation a mass production process, more than an artistic and professional activity based on systematic procedures.

There was a turning point in 1982 as a result of Lucien Marleau's seminal article, *Le sous-titres ... un mal nécessaire* (Kang 2007, p. 83). It specifies the challenges in subtitling from four key perspectives: "technological, psychological, artistic-aesthetic and linguistic" (Cintas 2009, p. 2). Dirk Delabastita (1989, p. 193) has done more critical research on the semiotic nature of audiovisual translation by examining how linguistic, artistic, ideological, etc. factors manipulate audiovisual production. A monograph, *Les opérations linguistiques qui sous-tendent le processus de sous-titrage des films* published in 1993 by Teresa Tomaszewicz is seen as the first volume to systematise linguistic issues in the process of subtitling and subsequently open broader avenues for audiovisual translation research (Bogucki 2011, p. 9). With the rise of audiovisual translation, the above neglect has improved as a result of three main reasons. Yves Gambier (2003, p. 171) argues that these reasons lie in: first, the number of both conferences and publications on audiovisual communication has significantly increased annually. Second, new technology offering on-line and off-line services, is more and more convenient to people's life. Last but not least, there is a growing awareness of the importance of the impact of media among policy makers and mass audiences as language and cultural identity could be promoted and reinforced through the wide distribution of media.

Moreover, as Díaz-Cintas (2008, p. 1) suggests, audiovisual translation has increased its visibility as "one of the fastest growing areas" in the realm of Translation Studies, experiencing "an unprecedented surge" in academic interest. He suggests that this surge results from "its enormous impact on society" (Díaz-Cintas 2004, p. 50). As Díaz-Cintas

further explains, subtitling is in many ways key to the creation and construction of cultural representation:

Whilst aiming to mirror society, audiovisual productions invite their audiences to find resemblances in the characters they see on screen in a process of identification, which, in turn, triggers a mimetic attitude in some viewers. [...] AVT is the means through which not only information but also the assumptions and values of a society are filtered and transferred to other cultures. [...] subtitling enables such views to be made accessible to wider audiences unfamiliar with the language of the original production (Cintas 2009, p. 8).

Audiovisual productions, therefore, play a crucial role in the formation of cultural identification. In particular, this thesis focuses on the mediation of cultural identity via the prism of language between Anglophone films and their Chinese subtitled versions. Zoë Pettit (2009, p. 44) also underlines that audiovisual text offers a cultural representation of the world. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason argue (1990, p. 223) that the transfer of meaning in subtitling practice specifically requires a dual process of mediation:

[...] the translator has not only a bilingual ability but also a bi-cultural vision. Translators mediate between cultures (including ideologies, moral systems and sociocultural structures), seeking to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning.

Apart from the bilingual and bi-cultural mediation in the transfer of meaning, the thesis seeks to investigate a multi-layered transfer from Britain to China via the subtitling of five different genres of films as more than one transfer might operate concurrently. Investigating one particular genre is not sufficient and representative to look at the constraints and norms regarding the subtitling act that occur in China. Rather than taking all films into consideration, I take representative works as case-study films that pose a different challenge to the subtitling process. Hence, this thesis considers the subtitling of films engaging with different discourse domains, namely fantasy, politics, history, humour and gender/sexuality in their cultural specificities. This process of mediation includes a multi-layered transfer.

### 1.1.1. A Brief History of Screen Translation in China

With a particular focus on subtitling English language sources for a Chinese contemporary film audience, this section embarks on a brief history on screen translation in China, followed by a critical landscape of subtitling in the Chinese context. There were no dubbed

films until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949<sup>9</sup> (Yu 2013, p. 58). In early 1949, the Changchun Film Studio of Northeast China, the biggest of its kind in Northeast China, started film dubbing. After Mainland China was fully liberated by the end of 1949, Beijing and Shanghai began to dub films. In 1950, the Shanghai Film Studio set up a dubbing department and dubbed its first film – a Russian one entitled *The Little Hero* (Qian 2004, p. 53). In 1957, the Dubbing Department became an independent dubbing studio. It was the first independent film dubbing studio in China. During the decade of the Cultural Revolution, a political upheaval from 1966 to 1976<sup>10</sup>, the only foreign films mainlanders were allowed to watch were two Russian films: *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918* (Deng and Treiman 1997, p. 394). However, fewer people could afford to watch television in the 1980s since television sets were a big luxury for most families before China embarked on reform in 1978<sup>11</sup> (Qian 2004, p. 54). In some cinemas in a few major cities, film audiences who did not know foreign languages might listen to simultaneous interpretation through earphones attached to the seat when watching foreign films. But listening to the simultaneous interpretation had no great pleasure, as the interpretation was usually incompetent and frequently interrupted (Kang 2007, p. 84; Lingli Zhang et al. 2008, p. 97; Qian 2004, p. 52).

After China opened itself to the outside world, screen translation boomed as a result of losing control over the impact of foreign films stipulated by the China Film Corporation. The subtitling market has prospered<sup>12</sup> as a result of the increasing number of imported films. The China Film Corporation has the authority to import and distribute foreign films. A large investment has been made in the film industry to cultivate cultural exchange since

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<sup>9</sup> For more details on the development of film translation in China before 1949, see Yu (2013, p. 58) and Ma (2005, pp. 22-26).

<sup>10</sup> The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a mass movement, proposed by Mao Zedong and his agents. Universities were shut down entirely from 1966 to 1972; students and other urban workers, especially professionals were sent down to the countryside to work as peasants. "Class enemies" included officials, intellectuals, proletarians, prisoners under Chaing Kai-shek's regime, traitors, Chinese who had returned from overseas, spies, etc. Most of them were politically examined and denounced, publicly humiliated, forced to confess their "sins" or physically tortured. The main purpose of this movement was for national advancement. In reality, this socio-political movement led to a massive economic slowdown (Zuo 1991, pp. 101-103).

<sup>11</sup> In 1978, Deng Xiaoping launched the "Reform and Opening up Policy", emphasising that "science and technology are the first productive force", and that was crucial for China to stimulate the educated and the talented people. He also noted the urgent need to reform education and to strengthen literacy and civilisation among citizens (Olivia 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Statistics illustrate the booming situation in film importation in China, please see Zhao (2000b, p. 3).

China opened up to the outside world (Fong 2009, p. 16). In 1997, both central and provincial television stations in mainland China dubbed and played 2000 television series and films, 66 percent of which were soap operas, action films and sitcoms (Zhao 2000a, p. 120). This phenomenon of importing American soap operas, sitcoms and action films indeed attracted a large audience in the late 1980s in China (Qian 2009, p. 20). Mainlanders sometimes watched subtitled western films imported from Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore. Nevertheless, the majority of Chinese people appears to prefer dubbed films to subtitled ones for two main reasons:

- (1) China still has a considerable number of illiterates and semi-literates who cannot read subtitles<sup>13</sup>.
- (2) The ethnic minorities living in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region have their own languages that are totally different from Chinese. Those educated ones can now listen to Chinese, but most of them still have difficulty reading Chinese (Qian 2004, pp. 52-53).

Though political intervention no longer plays such a large role in the selection of foreign films as it did during the Cultural Revolution, it is still an important factor (Qian 2004, p. 54). This is because Chinese authorities intervene to determine the proportion of imported films so that China's relation with the outside world is relatively balanced (Qian 2004, p. 55). Therefore, from 1957 to 1999, the Shanghai Film Dubbing Studio dubbed more than 1000 films ranging from documentaries, cartoons and popular science films from 48 countries, whose languages include English, Russian, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Indian, Arabic, Japanese, Korean, Albanian, Vietnamese, etc. (Qian 2004, p. 55). However, the popularity of dubbing has declined since the mid-1990s (Qian 2004, p. 57). This fall has resulted from two main factors, high cost for local consumers to buy cinema tickets and the poorer quality of foreign television programmes (Qian 2004, pp. 57-58). Animated films, however, constitute an exception to this phenomenon as children prefer to watch in dubbed form (Yu 2013, p. 65). Although there has been a shift from the predominance of dubbing in the early 1980s to subtitling in contemporary China, both forms continue to co-exist in a Chinese market (Yu 2013, pp. 57-65).

We cannot go further without explaining the censorship regarding the films which are imported, released and dubbed/subtitled in China. At this juncture, two constraints on cultural conventions and political restrictions should be considered in the subtitling act in

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<sup>13</sup> In contrast to Chinese subtitling practice, former Western European communities use subtitling as educational pedagogy to enhance literacy amongst viewers (Gottlieb 2004, p. 83).



China. These constraints are largely dependent on how the films are subtitled and mediated for the target audience. Audiovisual censorship in China involves the interplay of several key official institutions: the China Film Corporation (distribution, import and export of films), the Exhibition Bureau and its regional subsidiaries (regulation and admission prices), the Ministry of Culture (the import and distribution of home audiovisual products) and the State Administration of Radio and Television of the People's Republic of China<sup>14</sup> (editing and exhibition of films) (Wang and Zhang 2017, p. 304). The Chinese government directly monitors the film industry and the complex regulatory structures governing the media (Wang and Zhang 2017, p. 304). To be specific, the China Film Corporation not only decides the importing countries of films but also decides which individual films can be imported. Two criteria are taken into account pertaining to the imported films. They must politically support China and Communism and culturally exclude religious propaganda, pornography and violence (Zhang 2004, p. 191). State Administration of Radio and Television of the People's Republic of China in 2014 (SAPPRFT 2001) regulates the editing and exhibition of films in a way which bans any content that:

- denies the basic principles determined by the constitution
- affects the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of China
- leaks classified information threatening domestic security
- encourages hatred and discrimination among ethnic groups
- violates ethical cultural norms and principles
- propagates cults and superstitions
- disturbs social order and threatens social stability
- depicts pornography, gambling, violence, or abets people to commit crimes
- humiliates or defames others, or damages the lawful interests of others
- compromises social morality or traditional cultures in China
- contains information which is prohibited by law. (Wang and Zhang 2017, p. 304)

Based on these cultural and political constraints, the basic procedures for foreign films imported to China include four steps: selection, censorship, negotiation with the foreign film distributors and the approval by the National Film Review Committee that is directly affiliated with State Administration of Radio and Television of the People's Republic of

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<sup>14</sup> The State Administration of Radio and Television (SART) of the People's Republic of China was formerly known as the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) of the People's Republic of China and State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), etc. The name of this state-owned department was recently updated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, unveiled after the first session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) on 13 March 2018. This new establishment of the State Administration of Radio and Television (SART) is dissolved from the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) of the People's Republic of China. Press, publication and film will be under the direct management of the Publicity Department (Briel 2018).

China (SAPPRFT 2001). According to Zhang and Li (2014, p.148), in 2014, China retained a strict quota of 34 foreign films per year, which was an increase of 27% compared with that of the previous year. In addition, the Chinese government aims to raise the allowance to 44 films annually. The strict regulation shows the specific standard of censorship on film importation and the need for China to connect to the outside world. Due to the above processes of censorship and the limited quota to import films, delays may occur when these films are released in the Chinese market (Rou 2013). There are two main approaches underpinning the way foreign films are distributed into the Chinese market (Yang 2017). They are “分账片” /“Fenzhang Pian” (Chinese authorities have partial copyright of the imported film) and “批片/ “Pi Pian” (Chinese authorities have the entire copyright of the imported film). The former type of film distribution is released in China at the same time or shortly after the original, while the latter category’s release lags far behind the original foreign film’s release. The distinction between them lies in their copyright. Where the Chinese authorities have only partial copyright of the imported film “分账片”/ “Fenzhang Pian”, they merely have the right to show the foreign films yet the source film country reserves the copyright of the film. In this way, the source film distributor benefits more from the box office. However, despite not having the entire copyright of imported films, this approach still achieved significant box-office success, obtaining 14.5 billion RMB during 1997 to 1999 in the Chinese market, which accounted for 44% of the entire office-box revenue during these three years (Li 2005). In contrast, another approach is to hold the entire copyright distancing the foreign distributor in relation to the revenue of the film. The more popular the imported film is, the more financial benefits the domestic investors gain in this way (Yang 2017).

Additionally, China has very clear strategies behind the selection process on imported films. According to the Chinese Board of Film Censors of State Administration of Radio and Television of the People’s Republic of China, its committee is composed of 36 people from different fields to select the 34 imported foreign films each year including professors from the Department of Directing at Beijing Film Academy, celebrated directors, the Cultural Commissioner from the Propaganda Department of All-China Women Federation (ACWF) and the Director of Communication from the State Administration for Religious Affairs, etc. The strict standard they rely on is the *Regulations on Administration of Films* issued

in December 2001 by the State Council. Among the eleven regulations, only one refers to the techniques and quality of the film, the rest of them take the films' themes and ideologies into consideration. The contents to examine exclude confidential information, threats and harm to our country and to the benefit of the Chinese people. Contents including the elements of violence, pornography, and political or religious propaganda are also prohibited (Qian 2004, p. 54; SAPPRFT 2001).

In China, only two companies have the permission to import foreign films, China Film Group Corporation and Huaxia Film Distribution Corporation Limited. Accordingly, the government has a strict regulation for the subtitling practice to follow. Two procedures in particular are key: Firstly, the original film lines have to be scrutinised by State Administration of Radio and Television of the People's Republic of China. Secondly, if this examination passes, the government will authorise the above two companies to subtitle. Four translation companies subsequently, contribute to the translation. They are the Dubbing Center of China Film Group, Shanghai Dubbing Studio, Changchun Film Group Corporation and August Film Studio<sup>15</sup>. The main reason for these four companies being responsible for film translation is that they have national authorisation (Newspaper 2014). In order to ensure the quality of the imported film, four suggestions are key: (1) preference should be films adapted from classical works; (2) quality over quantity; (3) content and ideology; (4) and making a balanced selection of films from all over the world (Anonymous 2005). It is interesting to note that an age-rating system on audiovisual produces has not yet been implemented in China. Consequently, the government has to ensure that all the programs shown either on television or in the cinema are suitable for all walks of people even for the younger generation. By doing so, any references to sex and vulgarity in audiovisual products may be mediated in a far milder way to adhere to this convention (Zhang 2013, pp. 32-33). The translator, in practice, is responsible for toning down politically and culturally inappropriate elements (Zhang 2004, p. 191). It is

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<sup>15</sup> The original Chinese names of the translation companies are: 中影集团译制中心 ("the Dubbing Center of China Film Group")、上海电影集团译制片厂 ("Shanghai Dubbing Studio")、长春电影集团译制片厂 ("Changchun Film Group Corporation")、八一电影制片厂 ("August Film Studio"). For the first two translation companies, the English translated names suggest that the companies concerned do dubbing rather than subtitling. Actually, these four companies not only do dubbing but also subtitling while dubbing was launched earlier than the subtitling practice in China which may explain the selection of the translated name (Ma 2005, pp. 24-26). In Chinese, "译制"/ "dubbing" refers to not only the dubbing practice itself, but also the other translated approaches such as subtitling, captioning, interpreting, etc. (Ma 2005, pp. 24-25).

the translator's responsibility to judge whether it is culturally, religiously, and politically appropriate or not to the domestic culture. After all, the subtitler dictates what and how to translate since his/her translation mission is culturally bounded (Zhang 2004, p. 191).

However, under the restriction of the limited import quota by number and the stringent censorship by content, these authorised audiovisual products do not seem to cater fully to the tastes of Chinese audiences, especially for the younger generation. In light of this, fansubbing will be discussed in relation to its volunteer work as it represents a form of translation by non-professionals which has a profound cultural impact on Chinese society (Zhang 2013, pp. 30-33). To meet the demand of efficiency and popularity in the Chinese market, the most recent trend of subtitling practice in China seems to prefer amateur translators who are able to produce subtitles more effectively than the authorised subtitles (Yao 2014, p. 147). The most well-known subtitling groups<sup>16</sup> include “伊甸园、人人影视和馨灵风软字幕组” / “YDY Translate Extreme Team, Fansubbing Group YYeTs<sup>17</sup> and Panlingfengruan Subtitling Group” (Kang 2007, p. 85). Another key reasons for this popularity of amateur subtitles lie in their spirit of “free content-sharing, community and voluntarism” that enables them to engage the target audience and more importantly, to contest official state domination despite strict censorship (Wang and Zhang 2017, p. 301; Zhang and Mao 2013, p. 46; Zhang 2013, p. 31). However, due to its illegitimate nature<sup>18</sup>, this subtitling act needs standardisation to improve the quality of the translation (Yao 2014, p. 147).

### 1.1.2. The Critical Landscape of Subtitling in China

This section first intends to analyse subtitling practice and its development within audiovisual translation and translation studies in China from 2006 to 2016<sup>19</sup>. In particular,

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<sup>16</sup> For more fansubbing groups circulate in China, see Wang and Zhang (2017, p. 306).

<sup>17</sup> The fansubbing group YYeTs (人人影视) serves as the most popular and largest fansubbing development of Chinese fansubbing, for more details on the development of this widely received website, please see Wang (2017).

<sup>18</sup> I acknowledge the significant role played by fansubbing to meet the need of the younger generation, but this project focuses on the authorised translation of Anglophone films via cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer. This works best if taking into account the official version that distributes nation-wide and worldwide as it is most likely to reveal the state intention via the medium of subtitles than the user-led production made by amateur subtitlers.

<sup>19</sup> Similar research records the research of film translation from 1995 to 2008 can be found in Lingli Zhang et al. (2008, pp. 110-113); (Liu; et al. 2011, pp. 103-107). I am aware of the fact that no research has been

this section starts with the papers published in academic journals<sup>20</sup>. They identify the trends and limitations of subtitling in China. Figure 1 demonstrates that slightly more attention has been paid to audiovisual translation than specifically to subtitling<sup>21</sup> during 2006 to 2009. But from 2012 onwards, there is a dramatic increase of academic interest in subtitling as 33% more subtitling papers were published in 2014 than that of audiovisual translation.

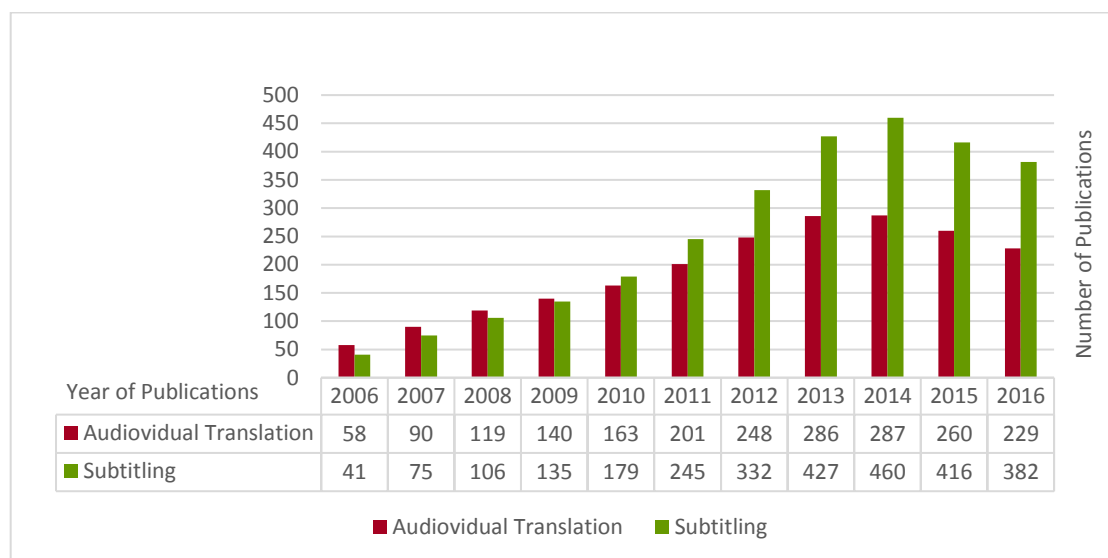


Figure 1 - Profile of Published Papers Regarding Subtitling and Audiovisual Translation from CNKI from 2006-2016

Although subtitling has recently become far more visible in China in academic terms, it is still a neglected area in the field of translation studies. As shown in Figure 2, the published papers in relation to subtitling merely account for approximately 2% of those Translation Studies from 2012 to 2016. Ning Zhao (2005, p. 55) argues that more attention should be paid to subtitling given its significant impact on society in terms of cultural exchange, intercultural communication, the promotion of ethical and moral standards, values, and humanism. A large number of imported films into China require qualified film translation, in reality, the research on subtitling is severely insufficient (Kang 2007, p. 81).

year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
content											

done regarding the statistics of published articles between subtitling and audiovisual translation for the recent decade. Therefore, I particularly chose this period of year from 2006 to 2016.

<sup>20</sup> The published papers under discussion are available at CNKI databases (China National Knowledge Infrastructure, “中国知网”) where stores academic journals, papers and official materials in China.

<sup>21</sup> Although subtitling is a form of audiovisual translation, compared with the contemporary development of audiovisual translation in China, very little attention has been in particular paid to the subtitling practice.

Number of Published Papers on Subtitling	41	75	106	135	179	245	332	427	460	416	382
Number of Published Paper on Translation Studies	9728	12394	13876	14357	15674	17333	18410	19926	21567	20839	19442
Percentage of Subtitling Publication in that of Translation Studies	0.42%	0.61%	0.76%	0.94%	1.14%	1.41%	1.80%	2.14%	2.13%	2.00%	1.96%

Figure 2 - Profile of Published Papers Regarding Subtitling and Translation Studies and Their Relationship from CNKI from 2006 to 2016

Le Kang (2007, p. 85) argues that there are no systematic theories on audiovisual translation in China, let alone on subtitling as Chinese Translation Studies focus primarily on poems, novels, proses, etc. and their translations (Yang 2006, p. 96). Given the dramatic lack of research with regard to audiovisual translation and subtitling, caution must be taken to improve the situation. Qian Shaochang, a pioneer in Chinese audiovisual translation, based on his experienced practice of audiovisual translation, summarises five key features that characterise audiovisual translation -- “聆听性，综合性，瞬间性，通俗性和无注性”<sup>22</sup> (“comprehensible, comprehensive, time-efficient, popular and non-annotative”) (Kang 2007, p. 85). To develop these themes, he agrees with five basic principles for translator’s reference from five perspectives. These perspectives relate to “口语化，人物性格化，情感化，口型化，通俗化”<sup>23</sup> (“colloquialism, character personality, emotion, synchronisation and popularity”) (Kang 2007, p. 85).

The Chinese authorities are aware that it is necessary to make research collaborations in the discipline of subtitling such as establishing collaborated associations like the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST), in hopes of fostering research exchange and professionalising subtitling practice (Yao 2014, p. 147). Practically speaking, standardisation and simplification are two main techniques applied to Chinese subtitles (Yu 2013, p. 60). The first one involves a frequent change of mode from a spoken dialogue to a written text, while the latter considers spatial and temporal constraints in subtitling (Yu 2013, pp. 60-61).

Subtitling operates within both time and space constraints. Subtitles cannot just flash on the screen for a short time, which will prevent the audience from understanding. If they are shown for too long, the audience is likely to re-read and will lose the thread of the

<sup>22</sup> More details on these five key features of audiovisual translation, please consult (Qian 2000, pp. 61-65).

<sup>23</sup> More details on these five basic principles, please consult (Ma 1997, pp. 81-84).

visual action (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 85). According to Díaz-Cintas (2014, p. 89), six seconds is the suggested longest exposure time to keep a full two lines on screen in English. He further (2014, p. 89) asserts that subtitles should remain on screen for at least one second so that the viewer can comprehend them. The presentation of subtitling differs in China and the West. In general, a subtitle in a Western language is recommended to contain 37 to 39 letters per line with a maximum of two lines (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 89). Generally, English subtitles occupy more space than Chinese ones due to the distinction between graphic system and syntactic structure (Yu 2013, pp. 59-60). English concentrates on hypotaxis<sup>24</sup> where syntactic devices and lexical equivalence collaboratively assist in comprehension while Chinese prioritises parataxis<sup>25</sup> heavily dependent on contextual consistence (Yang 2006, p. 96). Chinese occupies less space but contains more semantic load than English (Fong 2009, p. 94). The maximal number of Chinese characters is 14 in each line and in a maximum of two lines (Yuan 2012, p. 59). Chinese people prefer single-line subtitles because more characters on display may lead to a reduced font size, which naturally reduces the legibility and readability of subtitles (Ou 1991, pp. 335-346). In contrast to 14 as the maximum number of characters per line, some subtitles exceed this maximised Chinese characters in practice (Yu 2013, p. 60). Given the constraints of space and time, Chinese subtitling practice tends to adopt reduction (Li 2001, p. 39) with the objective to remain concise and clear (Yu 2013, p. 59). Subtitling is consequently known as the “reductive form of translation” (De Linde 1995) or “constrained translation” (Díaz-Cintas 1999) as “condensation, reductive paraphrasing and deletion”<sup>26</sup> commonly occur in the production of subtitles (Li 2001, p. 39).

In terms of position, Western subtitles are placed at the bottom of the picture in either centred or left-aligned form (Gottlieb 2001, p. 30). The Chinese subtitles are presented either in pyramid format, first offering a top short sentence followed by a longer bottom

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<sup>24</sup> Hypotactic English underlines a clear use of conjunctions in linking clauses via syntactic devices and lexical equivalence (Tse 2010, pp. 1-2; Yang 2006, p. 96).

<sup>25</sup> The paratactic features of Chinese rely less on connectives to show semantic or logical comprehension. Rather, Chinese characters are heavily dependent on contextual coherence, indicating an absence of complex positional variation (Tse 2010, pp. 1-2; Yang 2006, p. 96).

<sup>26</sup> Ning Zhao. 2006. 试析电影字幕限制因素及翻译策略 [Preliminary Study of Tactics of Film's Subtitles Translation]. 中国民航学院学报 *[Journal of Civil Aviation University of China]*, 2005: 23 (5), pp. 55-59; Yang Yang. 2006. 电影字幕翻译述评 [A Review of the Movie Subtitling Translation]. 西南交通大学学报 (社会科学版) *[Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University (Social Science)]* 7 (4), p. 97.

line, or in an inverted-triangle format (Yuan 2012, p. 60). As illustrated in Figure 3, “A” represents a random Chinese character displaying on the screen.

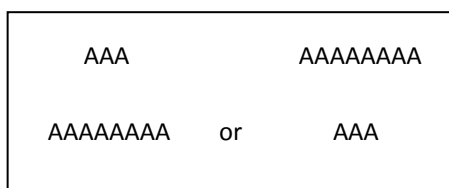


Figure 3 - Layout of Chinese Subtitles

In addition, punctuation also plays a significant role in subtitling practice. Quotation marks and ellipses are permitted at the end of a line in the Chinese subtitles. Only one comma is allowed in each line, indicating that the maximum of commas in Chinese subtitles is two because of the stipulated two-line display. What is more, exclamation marks and question marks are optional (Yuan 2012, p. 60). It is important to consider the reading speed in the progression of acknowledging subtitles. No more than 4 to 5 Chinese characters should be presented per second. Otherwise, it will hinder the audience’s comprehension (Yuan 2012, p. 60). Fotios Karamitroglou (1998, p. 3) argues that there is no profound distinction in the reading pattern in subtitles between children and adults. However, in relation to the reading speed, children seem to take longer pauses when reading than adults (Lefton et al. 1979, p. 319). Moreover, viewers’ reading speed differs according to “the quantity and complexity of linguistic information in subtitles” (Linde and Kay 1999, p. 6). Additional resources (picture and sound) enhance the processing of subtitles for audiences (De Bruycker and d’Ydewalle 2003, pp. 679-680).

Critical insights into the Chinese-English subtitling relationship are visible in recent work by young Chinese scholars. Three doctoral theses shed light on subtitling from English into Chinese via case studies of audiovisual products. The most recent one was conducted by Long Yuan (2015), whose objective is to examine whether the subtitling of sexual taboo is transferrable in the case of the TV series *Sex and the City* and to observe the translation strategies which have been used to satisfy the requirements of audiences. The second one focuses on the Chinese translation of British political humour with particular reference to a contemporary and popular British sitcom *Yes Prime Minister*, with the aim of producing an innovative accumulation of target-oriented descriptive case studies from English into Chinese (Chang 2005). The last one, entitled *Coherence and Audience Reception in Subtitling with Special Reference to Connectives* (Kao 2011), focuses on the applicability



of connectives to audiovisual translation. My thesis draws on the insights of these doctoral theses, but seeks to break new ground by offering the first study of subtitling in relation to five distinct film genres - children's films, political films, historical films, films targeted at a female audience and comedy films. My thesis seeks to evaluate whether subtitling strategies are conditioned by the genre of the film in question and its target audience, whilst clearly focusing on the range of subtitling techniques and approaches deployed in the subtitling of a diverse set of film types.

Not only does my thesis seek to underline the complexity of the subtitling transactions in political, cultural, linguistic and commercial terms between China and these films linked to Britain in a variety of ways, it also seeks to underline the growing importance of subtitling as an area of study in China. In recent years, both the rate of literacy and the percentage of well-educated people have greatly increased due to the implementation of the policy of reform and opening up to the outside world (Yu 2013, p. 58). In China, translation and subtitling have become increasingly popular among youngsters and literate people as an awareness of the importance of foreign languages is spreading (Yu 2013, p. 58). Furthermore, the rapid development of technology has accelerated the distribution of foreign films (Yu 2013, p. 58). Based on the wide distribution of films, the field of audiovisual translation has a far-reaching potential in pedagogical and didactic aspects (Cintas 2009, p. 11). Therefore, the assessment of the intercultural constraints in films between Britain and China is of great importance.

## 1.2. Research Questions

This thesis will explore the diverse range of subtitling strategies employed across a range of specific film genres as English-language products are mediated linguistically and culturally for a Chinese audience. In each of its chapters, the thesis will underline the rationale for the selection of the film, the detailed theoretical framework underpinning the structure of each chapter as well as the significance of relevant examples. The Chinese authorities have officially released all the selected films in DVD format and I will use these verified DVDs for analysis throughout this project. In order to examine the complex and intriguing subtitling relationship between the Anglophone source films and their Chinese subtitled versions, three main research questions are raised:

- (1) How do the five case studies cast light on the complexities and specificities of the subtitling process between Anglophone source films and the Chinese contexts for which they are destined when subtitled?
- (2) How do the case study films mediate the British culture and language of their source for the Chinese culture of their target audience?
- (3) Do specific film genres trigger the use of specific subtitling strategies in specific film genres or is the process of subtitling more fluid and dynamic?

### 1.3. Methodology

The methodology of this thesis is multiform. It combines close reading of the language of the officially released subtitles with cultural, historical, political, literary and technical analysis. The thesis's methodology is deliberately multiple as it seeks to underline the multiplicity of subtitles as a creative artefact. While the thesis does refer to the Chinese published translations of the *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *Oliver Twist* novels, it does not overly rely on them. While there are clear common strategies used in relation to the subtitling of names, for example, it is essential to highlight the published translations and the official subtitles as wholly distinct creative works. The time and space constraints of the subtitling process mean that the subtitlers cannot adopt the same translation strategies as those translators who translated the novels.

To answer specifically the above questions, I am using five case study films from across a range of genres. These films are in many ways representative of the range and breadth of film releases in a British context and include a children's film, a political film, a historical film, a film targeted at a female audience and a comedy. This thesis looks in part at how a sense of British history, culture, contemporary society and politics is subtitled for a Chinese audience.

This thesis makes no claim to define what Britishness is, recognising it as a prevalent but diffuse and subjective concept. This thesis will investigate how visions of Britain that are fashioned or fabricated by the interaction of these films are conveyed in their subtitled form for a Chinese audience. I am aware that my analysis of this transformation and translation of British culture for a Chinese market also passes through the prism of my

own subjectivity. However, as Maria Tymoczko (2014, pp. 113-114) explains, such potential subjectivity is perhaps unavoidable, as interpretative practices are by no means “objective”. These interpretations are heavily dependent on the background of the describers, and those describers belong to dominant cultures. It is, therefore, better to acknowledge the potential for subjectivity, rather than pretending to be perfectly neutral. This thesis does not use an ethnographic approach, but does make reference to ethnography to clarify its basic principle and address the issue of subjectivity in relation to the interpretation of British specificities from a Chinese perspective. As Tymoczko (2014, p. 114) observes:

Ethnographic representation is a form of definition, creating or constructing a tangible image of the cultural represented, shaped by the language and discourses of the ethnographer. Increasingly it has also been recognized that such constructed images have ideological and ethical aspects; as with representation in general – there is an implicit or explicit social purpose, a claiming of authority, an intent to effect action, and an appropriation of the right to speak for another culture in all ethnographic representations, even if these facets are effaced or unacknowledged by the ethnographer.

This admission, however, does not amount to the acceptance of bias in my methodology; on the contrary, it means that awareness of the potential for bias has led me to put more care into constructing a rigorous methodology. The awareness of subjectivity leads to a more sophisticated representation in translation.

#### 1.4. Overview of Theoretical Framework

Having formulated the key justifications for the thesis’s methodology, this section will now outline the theoretical structures in terms of translational and cultural approaches which the study will use to read the five distinct case studies. Furthermore, the way the representative examples are grouped is also worth discussing. It provides new insights in literary criticism in each case-study film.

##### 1.4.1. Translation and Cultural Theories

This thesis draws heavily on the binary argument proposed by Lawrence Venuti in relation to translation approaches. Venuti (1986, pp. 20-21) argues that translators have two strategies to choose from. They can take the foreign text and domesticate it for the target audience, accommodating the potential audience and their cultural mores. Or, they can allow the foreignness of their source to shine through in their translation, allowing their

audience to access it but via foreignising strategies which give their audience a taste of the alterity of the source. This research seeks to analyse whether Chinese subtitles foreignise or domesticate in their mediation of my case study films. It also seeks to explore whether strategies beyond Venuti's binary proposal are used as well, to ascertain whether subtitlers move more fluidly between the poles of foreignisation and domestication, crafting complex, composite strategies which move between what Venuti presents as polar opposites. The research, therefore, sets out to analyse the subtitling process of Britain from English to Chinese with particular reference to different film genres by examining the way translation shapes the image of Britain through the lenses of Chinese culture. The formation of cultural identities is a double-edge process, as Venuti (1998, pp. 67-68) argues:

translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures [...]. Translation patterns that come to be fairly established fix stereotypes for foreign cultures, excluding values, debates, and conflicts that don't appear to serve domestic agendas. In creating stereotypes, translation may attach esteem or stigma to specific ethnic, racial and national groupings [...]. Yet since translations are usually designed for specific cultural constituencies, they set out a process of identity formation that is double-edged.

According to Venuti (1998, p. 68) in fact, "as translation constructs a domestic representation for a foreign text and culture, it simultaneously constructs a domestic subject". This is to say that, as subtitling constructs an image of Britain in China, it also reinforces an image of China for Chinese viewers in a synchronous manner. The complex patterns of translating Britain for a Chinese film audience, on one hand, reflect the fixed stereotypes for British culture; on the other hand, they interact with Chinese domestic agendas. The service of domestic agendas in each case will suggest what is perceived as historically and culturally appropriate for the receiving culture. An explanation of the definition of *representation* is imperative in translating and reshaping Britain for a contemporary Chinese audience. As defined by Maria Tymoczko (2014, p. 112), *representation*

has a formal standing in society, presenting evidence or argument for a particular purpose, and translations must be considered in this light. Translation is also involved in achieving mental clarity. A translation stands in place of another entity and has authority to substitute for or act in place of that entity. These statements capture only some of the implications that follow from regarding translations as representations.

This is to say that, the translation could be a representation in the construction of foreign cultural identity into the receiving culture, taking the key domestic agenda into account with the aim of serving the domestic significance. In order to bring this cultural representation to a much wider ideological attention, this section will draw on the relationship among discourses, representation, and translation. As Tymoczko (2014, pp. 112-113) argues,

the definition of *representation* and the use of representation as a frame of reference for translation make manifest some of the reasons why translation itself is so powerful an act, why translations have played significant and transformative roles in many cultural contexts throughout history. The definition of *representation* illuminates why translations are constitutive of reality and why the process of translation is associated with textual manipulation.

The above argument implies that the translational act might be powerful in contextual manipulation via ideological or polemical contestations manifested in representations. In the process of ideological representations, the presence of domestic discourse plays a significant role in the formation of representations (Tymoczko 2014, p. 113). Representations are driven by and enriched with pre-existing discourses that reveal the making of representations (Tymoczko 2014, p. 113). These pre-existing discourses reflect and are structured by hidden power<sup>27</sup> (Fairclough 2001, p. 51). The role of discourse as a form of shaping representations is highlighted by focusing on translation (Tymoczko 2014, p. 113). As a result, translation is shaped by those ideological discourses, which links ideology in translation (Tymoczko 2014, p. 113). In other words, cultural representation is a dual process. Firstly, as this thesis indicates, a shaping cultural process where foreign culture is foregrounded in the translational act because of its specificities and peculiarities; secondly, a reshaping cultural process, it reinforces the domestic implications in the complex process of intertwining foreign and domestic cultures. At times, clear overlaps appear between these two nations while occasionally contrasts and contradictions may also become visible in this complicated culture-making process that is translation. Therefore, when subtitling the Anglophone films upon which this thesis draws, their British specificities pose a challenge to the subtitler. The main procedure of the study is to select some of the most telling examples associated with British specificities from a

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<sup>27</sup> The notion of “power behind discourse” proposed by Norman Fairclough is the interaction of the complete social order of discourse that is dominated by a hidden ideological power (Fairclough 2001, p. 55).

Chinese perspective in order to help readers comprehend the mediation of British language and culture which has been undertaken in the Chinese subtitles.

Lawrence Venuti (1986, pp. 20-21) argues that translation practice applies either foreignisation or domestication, while what this thesis reveals is that the verified Chinese subtitles by Chinese authorities make use of a dynamic range of translation strategies to convey and mediate the original film. This dynamic process records hybrid strategies such as domestication, foreignisation, neutralisation and transliteration<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, key moments of the official Chinese subtitles to these films resonate with arguments put forward by translation theories from Friedrich Schleiermacher and André Lefevere. Schleiermacher points out a clear cultural and linguistic gap between source text and target culture that the translator has to bridge, a gap in which he or she is embedded (Lefevere 1977, p. 88). In light of Lefevere (2002, p. 10), translation in whatever form is always a politically-driven act, driven by the politics of a target culture. Apart from the above diversity of translation theories, the subtitles also employ heritage and modern forms of language, particularly in the historical case study. In relation to heritage and archaic language, the cultural theory of Andrew Higson will be considered as he writes on how films translate heritage (Higson 1996a, p. 233). The translation theory of William Morris and his belief that the translator should immerse his/her reader in an archaic past (Bassnett 2013, p. 76) is also taken into account in the exploration and evaluation of the Chinese subtitles in relation to transferring the historical specificities of early Victorian England for a contemporary Chinese audience in the chapter on *Oliver Twist*. The Chinese translator and translation theorist Lin Shu also advocates the use of archaisms to convey classical Chinese distinctness to the West (Chen 2013, p. 362). Finally, Ernst-August Gutt's relevance theory (1991, p. 27) and Anthony Baldry and Paul Thibault's multimodality (2006, p. 11) add to the diversity of the theoretical basis of the thesis in the chapter of *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

While various translation theorists find voice in this thesis, Lawrence Venuti (1986) dominates. His exploration of the Foreignisation versus Domestication debate is core to my work. My thesis seeks to innovate by applying Venuti's model to new territories: China

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<sup>28</sup> All translation strategies to the subtitles of the five case films will be detailed in each following chapter.

and the act of subtitling. It underlines the core utility of Venuti in both contexts, exploring the value of translation theory in subtitling practice. Collectively, my chapters underline that Venuti's Foreignisation and Domestication are not polar opposite. Indeed, the subtitlers of my case studies use them flexibly and fluidly. Moreover, while the theoretical framework of the thesis is firmly rooted in translation theory, because it seeks to argue that subtitles are not merely linguistic but actually political, cultural, ideological objects, it also uses political, cultural and ideological theorists. It does so in order to underline the multiple layers of the subtitling process. Consequently, Chapter Two uses literary theorist Jerry Griswold (2006) in association with Venuti (1986) to read the subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) as a cultural text. Chapter Three uses Chinese and Anglophone political theorists alongside André Lefevere (2002) to access both the implicit and explicit politicalness of the Chinese subtitles. In Chapter Four, the literary and historical approaches of Eva Wai-Yee Hung (1980) to Dickens are applied to subtitles as text in order to explore the boundary between novel and subtitled film. In Chapter Five, the intersections of Ernst-August Gutt's (1986) Relevance Theory with Anthony Baldry and Paul Thibault's (2006) Multimodality are explored in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) as a case study to access how cultural appropriateness can be reached in the subtitles of the target text. In Chapter Six, diverse theorists of humour are used to explore the subtitling of *Notting Hill* (1999) and the ways in which the subtitles need not only to translate the language of their source but also its ability to make people laugh.

#### 1.4.2. Theoretical Model in Relation to the Categorisation of Examples

In order to underline the diverse theoretical and practical considerations at play in the subtitling process, this thesis adopts diverse critical frames in its bid to structure itself. Not only will it draw on the translation theory outlined above, but it also draws upon specific works of cultural, historical and political analysis specifically in relation to the categorisation of its examples. In Chapter Two it adopts Jerry Griswold's (2006, pp. 1-2) four themes in the construction of children's literature to capture and mediate the source film targeting children, followed by the additional considerations which are not encompassed by Griswold. When it comes to the translation of political film, Jonathan Charteris-Black (2005) and Meifang Zhang's (2016) arguments in works on political rhetoric and analysis are applied to my analysis of *The Iron Lady*. To respond to the

challenge that translators faced in historical context when subtitling *Oliver Twist*, examples drawn from the subtitles are grouped under Eva Wai-Yee Hung's (1980, p. 122) suggested aspects to unveil the historical specificities in early Dickens's Victorian era. The chick flick case study will apply Bronislaw Malinowski's (1994, p. 6) term "context of situation" to group examples from *Bridget Jones's Diary* with a clear attempt to broaden the scope of context. Lastly, in order to examine the complexities of humour in subtitling, Delia Chiaro's (2010a) notion of Verbally Expressed Humour (VEH) and its translation will be used as a starting point for analysing the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill*. Subsequently, four types of humour proposed by Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996) will be considered to test the suitability of the classification of comedic case-study film.

### 1.5. Main Contributions

Firstly, while subtitles are often assessed in solely linguistic terms, this thesis uses a range of analytical perspectives to approach the act of subtitling. It marries translation theory, literary criticism, political analysis and cultural criticism to unpick and analyse the translation strategies at play in the case study films. A dynamic theoretical framework is generated to argue that subtitles need to be evaluated as the intersection between multiple competing constraints and via the prism of multiple theoretical and scholarly disciplines.

Secondly, the originality of this research also resides in the diversity of the subtitles selected and in relation to the film genres to which the case studies belong. Rather than focusing on a single category, the project draws on a thematically heterogeneous pool of films. In doing so, this project reveals the multi-layered dynamics of transformation in a hybrid socio-historical context such as linguistic, cultural, political, historical, ideological transfer and the transfer of gender, sexuality, and humour. Therefore, it underlines a methodological contribution. The way the data is collected via different genres of films opens the broader horizon of exploring subtitling practice in British and Chinese contexts.

### 1.6. Thesis Synopsis

What this thesis will show is the complex range of dynamic and varied strategies used in the subtitling of Anglophone films into a Chinese context. It will evaluate the intricate



negotiation which takes place between source and target language/culture. The dissertation takes particular account of the Chinese values filtered through the subtitling process, values which shape the end product almost as much as the source. Five specific films have been chosen, as the chapters will show, because of the complexities they pose for the subtitling process between English and Chinese. Moreover, the successful distribution of these films and the specificities of subtitling for contrasting audiences and in dissimilar genres – a children’s film, a political piece, a historical adaptation, a chick flick, and a comedy – are the other rationales for the selections of these films.

In Chapter Two, “Subtitling Harry Potter’s Fantastic World: Linguistic and Cultural Transfer in a Subtitled Children’s Film”, I focus on subtitling a supranational magic world for children. I observe a more dynamic approach to the subtitling process in theoretical terms that echo the other worldly fantasy of the original with its magical strangeness. The chapter argues that the “madeupness” of this world empowers the subtitles to be similarly creative and inventive in their strategies to transfer meaning which works on multiple levels and resonates for different audiences. Interestingly, though, national considerations still feature in the transfer of this magical world which is supposedly not rooted in any real geographical context.

Chapter Three, “Subtitling a Political Film: Linguistic and Ideological Transfer in *the Iron Lady* (2011)” attempts to explore how British and Chinese politics shape the subtitling practice, seeking to analyse the specificities of subtitling Margaret Thatcher’s politics in the case study film. I identify different rhetorical strategies in political discourses between Britain and China, positing Chinese four-character idioms as vital components of the subtitling process specifically in relation to the political film of this case study and its rhetoric. By examining the translation, this chapter provides an argument that the subtitles convey a Conservative ideology in the Chinese context, despite the fact that that Conservative ideology appears at odds with the political structures of the target culture. The translation thus conveys the foreign language and the antithetical political culture.

Chapter Four, “Subtitling a Historical Film: Cultural and Temporal Transfer in *Oliver Twist* (2005)” investigates the question of how British history is mediated via Chinese history through the subtitling of this case study film. I see intriguing social similarities between

the source novel and the target culture. Also, the film resonates with contemporary political and social initiatives at the time of its release in China. The subtitles resonate with Higson's (1997) work on heritage because China translates this British heritage to reflect its own heritage. The Chinese translation re-directs and re-interprets British heritage to cater for 21<sup>st</sup>-century Chinese audiences by using either archaic or modern Chinese discourses.

The aim of Chapter Five, "Subtitling Bridget Jones's Fantasy World: The Transfer of Sexuality and Gender in a Chick Flick", is to examine how the Chinese subtitles of a modern British chick flick create a new iconography for femininity in Chinese culture. The Chinese rendering negotiates sexuality and swearing in the source film, redirecting them in culturally appropriate forms. Although the subtitles clearly privilege comprehension over sexuality and swearing, the chapter makes women's engagement with the taboo language and culture visible.

In the sixth and final case study chapter, "Subtitling Comedy: The Transfer of Humour in the Chinese Subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999)", I consider the complexities of verbal and non-verbal humour in the Chinese subtitles. Chapter Six also discusses how multiple layers of contexts enable a comprehensive interpretation of humour in the case study film. The subtitles underline that substitution is more frequently applied to address the culture-specific references, especially on the sensitive topics of sexuality and issues concerning cultural and political restrictions. Although linguistic equivalence is detected to transfer humour, the subtitles also employ cultural equivalence, as translators often inscribe an interpretation of the source text with the target culture.

The concluding chapter will present the findings and answers pertaining to the research questions set at the outset. This thesis offers an insight into the complexities of subtitling Anglophone films across five key genres. It unpicks the complex cultural and linguistic negotiations which lie behind the subtitling process. It pushes for a consideration of subtitles not just as a technical artefact, but instead as complex translational processes which sit at the confluence of linguistic, cultural, political and commercial considerations. Such is the complexity of the subtitling process, this thesis argues, that it needs to draw

on a range of disciplines - translation theory, political theory, cultural and literary studies  
- to be understood in its full resonance.

## 2. Subtitling Harry Potter's Fantastic World: Linguistic and Cultural Transfer in a Subtitled Children's Film

### 2.1. Aim of the Chapter

This chapter will focus on the way in which an Anglophone children's film is subtitled for a Chinese audience. As this subtitled film is adapted with the intention of making it suitable for children, the chapter will particularly focus on how the subtitles are mediated for a young Chinese viewer<sup>29</sup>. The chapter will also focus specifically on the Chinese subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*<sup>30</sup> (2001) in terms of the linguistic and cultural transfer. This Chinese subtitled film was distributed by an American entertainment company, Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., and was adapted from British novelist J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. The key research question is how the Chinese subtitles mediate the fantasy and imagination of Harry Potter's wizarding world and how subtitling works in the film aimed at children. J. K. Rowling's frequent play on words and hidden allusions make her work challenging to subtitle. Therefore, this chapter explores the mediation of Harry Potter's fantasy elements in the Chinese subtitles by the various techniques used to render them. It will draw on Jerry Griswold's (2006, pp. 1-2) findings on children's literature since comparatively little has been written on subtitling for children. Griswold's identification of specific themes in children's literature offers an innovative means of approaching cultural transfer in the medium of a subtitled film. This chapter will underline how the official Chinese subtitles mediate the cultural specificities which characterise the transnational world of Harry Potter.

### 2.2. Why *Harry Potter and Sorcerer's Stone*?

Published by Bloomsbury in June 1997, the British author J.K. Rowling's first Harry Potter book became Britain's best-selling novel in 2001, selling 1.1 million copies (Feral 2006, p.

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<sup>29</sup> Although adults can and do watch this film, the intended target is young Chinese audiences. Such intention plays a significant part in the way the film is subtitled.

<sup>30</sup> The official Chinese DVD version of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) that circulates in Mainland China is produced by "中国录音录像出版总社" ("China Audio and Video Publishing House") and is distributed by "上海新索音乐有限公司" ("Shanghai Epic Music Manufacturing Operations").

460). The Harry Potter sequels have been translated into sixty languages and read in over two hundred countries (Feral 2006, p. 460). The Chinese edition sold 10 million copies by mid-2007 (McElroy 2000, p. 23) and had a clear impact across urban China<sup>31</sup>. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, with its domestic tales and legends containing ghosts, magic and wizardry, offers an intriguing text to follow as it is subtitled into Chinese. This chapter will focus on the officially released DVD which builds on the original translation. The book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* was translated into Simplified Chinese (Mainland Chinese uses the simplified characters, while Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau use the traditional characters<sup>32</sup>) by two translators named 曹苏玲 (Suling Cao) and 马爱农 (Ainong Ma). They decided to use the pen name “苏农” (Sunong) that includes both of their first names to represent their translated work *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Tian 2015). It is difficult to confirm the identity of the subtitler(s) who worked on the officially released DVD as such information is not provided in the verified DVD. The translated book offers a fascinatingly hybrid cultural artefact which is still slightly British even while being overwhelmingly domesticated for the Chinese audience (Erni 2008, p. 141). These books have been subsequently made into a hugely successful eight-part film serie (Blake 2002, p. 2). The first film version, adapted from the first part of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, was released in the UK in November 2001, only four years after its first publication in book form (Blake 2002, p. 2). In China, the Harry Potter series began to be published in 2000 and was released by the national People's Literature Publishing

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<sup>31</sup> John Erni (2008, p. 141) writes compellingly on the three-fold impact *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* had on Chinese culture in book form. Firstly, he identifies the fascinating way in which the novel was translated into Chinese, showing how domestic Chinese issues shaped the translation almost as much as the source text itself. Secondly, Erni underlines the way in which *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* resonated in the contemporary youth audience by offering a new and vital work of imagination to a consumer group thirsty for such products. Thirdly, Erni makes clear the strength of the Harry Potter effect in China by analysing the range of counterfeit Harry Potter works which were triggered by the success of J.K. Rowling's books. A fake edition of a fifth Harry Potter book: *Harry Potter and Leopard Walk up to Dragon* and its numerous pirated subtitled DVDs appeared (Erni 2008, p. 141). The above unauthorised version of Harry Potter fraud that masqueraded as works written by Ms. Rowling is a back translation from a Chinese version entitled 《哈利·波特与豹走龙》 (*Harry Potter and Leopard Walk up to Dragon*) by underground publishers who claimed to publish under the imprint of major Chinese publishing houses, about which the authorised publishers themselves said they have no knowledge (French 2007). The Harry Potter fakes not merely indicate an economic and legal dispute, but indeed a cross-cultural and multidimensional phenomenon (Henningsen 2006, p. 277).

<sup>32</sup> For further information about the simplified and traditional characters, see: Chinese, Pin Pin. 2017. *Better to Learn Simplified or Traditional Chinese Characters?* [Online]. Available at: <<http://pinpinchinese.com/blog/simplified-vs-traditional-chinese-characters/>> [Accessed: 29 May 2017].

House (Erni 2008, p. 139). As the most popular children's fantasy fiction series in China's history (Erni 2008, p. 139), the subtitling of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* represents a key study and it is highly revealing in relation to Chinese subtitling practices.

The film, when subtitled into Chinese, demonstrates the challenges of translating British fantasy for young Chinese audiences. A definition of fantasy is essential to this chapter's progress. As Frank Weinreich (1998) remarks, the genre of *fantasy* contains supernatural elements:

Fantasy is a story, movie, game or piece of art, which incorporates supernatural phenomena as an important part of its content, which can assume different roles, but without which it would not function.

What Weinreich does not point out is that fantasy is not only supernatural, it also often represents itself as transcultural, as an imaginary world is not located in a real time or geography. However, what this chapter will reveal is that *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* has a distinct national identity even in its fantasy, and the official Chinese subtitles engage with that British cultural identity, using a variety of translation strategies to mediate that identity for a Chinese youth audience. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* represents a key case study because of the challenges that they pose for the subtitler: 1. The film is culturally located in a British context. 2. It is also culturally non-specific as fantasy is, to an extent, transnational which tends to be less attached to national boundaries. As Brian Laetz and Joshua Johnston (2008, p. 163) argue, fantasy is universal<sup>33</sup> as it represents "the very heights of imaginative expression" to all people. Therefore, as a case study, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is at the same time national and transcultural and the challenge for a subtitler is to create a transnational, universal fantasy that fits in with Chinese culture. Translating for children may present more challenges than translating for adults as preserving the child-appealing preferences needs special care in terms of the "occasional obscurity, awkwardness or unnatural-sounding phrasing" which adults are more likely to be tolerant of (Davies 2003, p. 66). The film also represents a key case study for Chinese subtitling because of the considerable number of people who have engaged with the book and the film from different sections of society in China. The

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<sup>33</sup> Bleiler, Everett Franklin. 1948. *The Checklist of Fantastic Literature: A Bibliography of Fantasy, Weird and Science Fiction Books Published in the English Language*. Chicago: Shasta Publishers.

crazed consumption of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in China reveals the popularity of fantasy fiction in Chinese publishing history. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* clearly resonated with young Chinese audiences due to the abundant magic found in its fantasy world (Erni 2008, p. 138). This enchantment fits into children's desirable tastes making them engage actively with the magical vitality (Davies 2003, p. 66), which attracted urban Chinese youth culture. Young audiences, John Erni (2008, p. 140) argues, position themselves as the cultural intermediaries of globalisation. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* caters for China's new consumer society, especially for children and youngsters (Erni 2008, p. 142). Erni suggests that after thirty years of China's one-child policy<sup>34</sup>, Chinese middle-class parents are able to provide their single child with a better education and enriched extracurricular activities (Erni 2008, p. 142). Therefore, the popularity of fantasy fiction is fuelled by the consumerist desire, which underlines a middle-class cultural consumption under the spell of globalisation (Erni 2008, p. 144). Another reason for the success of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in China, Gaoming Zhang (2007, pp. 9-10) argues, is that the children attending Hogwarts boarding school are educated to pursue truth and knowledge. This may well resonate with Chinese cultural values (Zhang et al. 2007, p. 99).

This chapter is constructed around three research questions that relate to the process of a linguistic and cultural transformation in the subtitles of British children's fantasy to the receiving Chinese culture:

- (1) How does *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* cast light on the specificities of subtitling for children?
- (2) How do the subtitles translate British children's fantasy for a young Chinese audience in this case study?
- (3) How do political, historical, and cultural factors influence the translation of the film for a young Chinese audience?

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<sup>34</sup> In order to control the population growth rate, the Chinese government introduced a one-child policy in 1979. It was stipulated that each couple in China could only have one child (Bongaarts and Greenhalgh 1985, p. 587).

### 2.3. Translation Strategies

What the subtitled version of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* reveals is that the official Chinese subtitles make use of a dynamic range of translation strategies to convey and mediate the original film. The subtitles show that translation theories are not applied to subtitling in static, homogeneous blocks. According to Lawrence Venuti (1986, pp. 20-21), translation practice applies either foreignisation or domestication strategies. Foreignisation, for Venuti, is the strategy whereby the translator allows elements of the foreign source culture to remain in the text. Domestication is the phenomenon whereby such foreign elements are mediated and recast for and in the target culture. However, in practice, as will be shown in this case study, subtitling is a far more dynamic process that records hybrid strategies such as domestication, foreignisation, neutralisation and transliteration which will be defined shortly. These strategies, when considered together, allow us to perceive the subtitles in new and exciting ways, and to engage with the limits and fault lines of Venuti's binary vision which implies that translation entails a clear-cut choice between domestication and foreignisation (Venuti 1986, pp. 20-21).

The Chinese subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) employ not only direct domestication, but also other strategies: foreignisation, neutralisation, and transliteration. Specifically, domestication is the translator's manipulation of the SL, with an attempt to create a transparent and fluent translation in the TL (Venuti 1986, p. 1). Furthermore, Eugue Nida's "dynamic" or "functional equivalence" in translation seeks to achieve complete naturalness and closeness in order to retain the same response as assumed for the source language receptor (Venuti 1986, p. 21). Nida's accuracy in dynamic equivalence is conterminous with Venuti's domestication. When Nida provides the target reader with a smooth reading, he excludes cultural otherness found in the source text. Communication here is manipulated under the influence of the target culture's values, therefore in reality it seems less a transmission of information than an act of cultural control for domestic purposes (Venuti 1986, p. 21). As we shall see, Nida's fluent communication frequently operates in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) in its subtitled form when the subtitler uses domesticating strategies to replace foreign otherness.



Another core strategy applied in the official Chinese subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) is foreignisation, which maintains the cultural peculiarities of the foreign text in the subtitled film. Foreignisation, in other words, means that the translator who detects cultural diversity in languages, consciously signals the sharp cultural disparities to the reader (Venuti 1986, p. 34). Foreignising translation can be a way to resist ethnocentrism, racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism which dominate in Anglo-American culture (Venuti 1986, pp. 20-21) and is frequently used in the Chinese subtitles in the transcription of names. This process helps the audience to get a sense of the British elements of this transcultural film, while the subtitled version of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* occasionally foreignises, so too does it domesticate, as we will see, neutralise and transliterate.

Neutralisation, another strategy frequently found in the Chinese subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, has much in common with domestication. As the term suggests, neutralisation precisely neutralises otherness, placing it in a comprehensible context for the Chinese target audiences. It serves as “functional or descriptive equivalent” (Newmark and Hall 1988, p. 103), generalising the source language into a culture-free word for the receptor (Armat et al. 2012, p. 1298).

The study of transliteration, as an evaluation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in subtitled form makes clear, is particularly rich in a Chinese context. Particular attention needs to be paid to the Chinese language, as its phonological form is an adapted logographic system. Thus, its phonetic system is not an immediate conversion of its writing system (Catford 1965, p. 68), but a phonological representation. Transliteration has been used to make phonetic equivalence from one language to another (Wan and Verspoor 1998, p. 1352). This process in fact tends to achieve only phonetic equivalence (Wan and Verspoor 1998, p. 1353). Yi Chen (2010b, p. 483) also notes that transliteration as the simplest translation method, functions when no equivalence is found between Chinese language and culture and English language and culture. Strictly speaking, TL graphological units cannot be considered a language at all (Catford 1965, p. 68), because the Chinese-English formation sometimes makes absolutely no sense in Chinese (Chen 2010b, p. 483). According to Roman Jakobson (1959, p. 233), this translational act of

articulation<sup>35</sup> also known as “interlingual translation or translation proper” relates to an “interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language”. Furthermore, in Wan and Verspoor’s study on *Automatic English-Chinese Name Transliteration* (Wan and Verspoor 1998)<sup>36</sup>, they introduce an algorithm for mapping from English names to Chinese characters based on reflective relations between English spelling and pronunciation and phonetic equivalences between English phonemes and Chinese characters (Wan and Verspoor 1998, p. 1352). Their automatic transliteration mechanisms are developed from an English-language database containing descriptive information about museum objects (Wan & Verspoor, 1998: 1352, cited in Verspoor et al, 1998: 75-76). They assert that for words with little or no semantic content such as personal and place names, referring to dictionary suffices where standard translations are provided. Otherwise, new names will occasionally emerge and automatically introduce into the Chinese lexical system (Wan and Verspoor 1998, p. 1352). To sum up, under the auspices of transliteration, Chinese readers are given at least the phonetic equivalence of the cultural peculiarities in relation to personal names, sports’ names, magical spells, etc. in the context of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (2001).

#### 2.4. Subtitling British Fantasy for Young Chinese Audiences

The naming system in Harry Potter’s fantasy world is a complex focus of research in the Chinese subtitling process that can be better understood in terms of the interplay between the linkages between the Chinese written translations and the Chinese subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. The made-up names used in the Chinese subtitles coincide with those found in the Chinese translation of the book (Rowling et al. 2000). Therefore, it can be proved that the Chinese subtitler uses the official translations of the books for a source in terms of the made-up names in Harry Potter series. It is interesting to note that in the Chinese translated book of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, it claims that this book is targeted at young readers between the ages of 11 and 14 (Rowling et al. 2000). This clarification justifies the child-like use of languages that map on to

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<sup>35</sup> Sakai, Naoki. 2006. Translation. *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(2-3), pp. 71-78.

<sup>36</sup> For further detail on the process of English-Chinese name transliteration, see Wan, Stephen and Verspoor, Cornelia Maria eds. 1998. *Automatic English-Chinese Name Transliteration for Development of Multilingual Resources*. In: Proceedings of the 17th international conference on Computational linguistics-Volume 2. Association for Computational Linguistics, pp. 1352-1356.

Griswold's (2006, pp. 1-2) key themes that particularly appeal to young readers. In his book *Feeling like a Kid: Childhood and Children's Literature*, Jerry Griswold suggests the above key common themes in the construction of children's literature. He refers in particular to these five categories, "snugness, scariness, smallness, lightness, and aliveness" (Griswold 2006, pp. 1-2), which, with the exception of the first one ("snugness")<sup>37</sup>, are relevant to this chapter. Since practically nothing has been written on subtitling for children in the context of subtitling Harry Potter's magical world, this chapter, therefore, will draw on Griswold's four key themes lie in the heart of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, to analyse the linguistic and cultural transfer of Harry Potter's fantastic world for young Chinese audiences. It will use them to assess the dynamic and different strategies the subtitles use to capture their source and mediate it. However, as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* makes clear, there are cultural and linguistic considerations which are not encompassed by Griswold's argument. They are the incantatory children's spells, the corporeal humour in the strange tasting sweets, childlike appellation and other made-up names. In Harry Potter's magical world, more made-up names that do not specifically fit into the above categories, will also be considered in the last category. The following will explain the selected characteristics by Griswold and the complexities of other characteristics and then associate them with the instances of British children's imagination drawn from the Chinese subtitles of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001).

#### 2.4.1. Scariness

Griswold's work makes specific reference to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in relation to one of his chosen categories, "scariness". Scary villains draw children's attention (Griswold 2006, pp. 1-2). The world of children's literature is not carefree; instead, it is a frightening realm where, for example, Voldemort stalks Harry Potter (Griswold 2006, p. 2). Consideration of the Chinese subtitles in relation to the theme of fear underlines that British and Chinese approaches to scariness in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* are markedly similar.

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<sup>37</sup> Griswold (2006, p. 1) defines "snugness" as common activities that are popular among the young but hardly seen in adulthood. For example, children are more likely to play underneath a table or to make tents from blankets and chairs, etc.

In the English-language Harry Potter films, humour is derived from the appellation of a scary monster in childlike cute terms. The horrible three-headed dog with its horrific appearance and innate violence is given a comically inappropriate name. Humour is generated by the mismatch between horrific objects and the sweet name given to it. Interestingly, the Chinese subtitles match this comic effect by means of cultural equivalence. They generate a comparable humour to the original film by giving the three-headed beast who guards the treasure for which the children quest an inappropriate name.

**Example 1 Scary Animal: Fluffy**

(1) *Description of Scene: Harry Potter is explaining that Fluffy, a horrible three-headed dog, is guarding an invaluable stone. But Snape, one of the teachers, is suspicious to steal it without anyone noticing.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -1 – Three-Headed Dog Fluffy

(3) *Line: HARRY: Whatever Fluffy's guarding, Snape's trying to steal it.*

(4) *Translation: 斯内普想偷毛毛看守的东西*

(5) *Back Translation: HARRY: Sineipu wants to steal Maomao's guarded item.*

J. K. Rowling links *Fluffy* to Greek mythology because he is like Kerberos<sup>38</sup> who guards the entrance of the underworld and greets the dead but none escapes his guarding (Knight 1990, p. 131). Rowling's three-headed dog is clearly intended to frighten child audiences. However, both the original novel and the Chinese subtitles humorously mismatch the

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<sup>38</sup> The three-headed dog figure derived from Greek mythology is known as Kerberos (Cerberus), which guards the gates of Hades, "the land of the dead, underworld", and prevents the escape of the dead. According to the ancient Greek words *kêr* and *erebos*, Kerberos means "demon of the dark" (Ganesan 1995, p. 132).

savage nature of the animal with its cute name. Humour here is a result of the disconnection between the cute name and the ferocious animal to which it is attached. The subtitles maintain both the word by finding an equivalent of *fluffy* and translating the associated comedic disconnection between animal and its appellation. The word *fluffy* itself means a creature covered with fur according to *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* (1989), which is retained in the subtitles, “毛毛”, literally means fur. *Fluffy* is a horrible creature in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* but the Chinese characters adopt childlike language for youngsters, “毛毛” in Chinese pinyin<sup>39</sup> is “Maomao”. “毛毛 (Maomao)” means “relaxing look with fine fur” in *Chinese-English Dictionary (C-E Dictionary)* (2013). Apart from a humour generated by the disconnection between the nice name and the awful object it refers to, the subtitles also involve repetitive characters associate with childlike language and speech acquisition. They are, therefore, well suited for situations where children are the majority of the target viewers. Such subtitles may maximise the potential for child audiences to appreciate the essence of the original film effect (Linde and Kay 1999, p. 57). This translation adopts the strategy of replication to transfer both cuteness and scariness in a repetitive way “毛毛” (“Maomao”) for a young Chinese child audience.

This Chinese example of replication in relation to *fluffy* sits in stark contrast to subtitling trends regarding to this character in other nations. Anne-Lise Feral (2006, p. 460) notes that in French versions of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, the subtitles tend to shift childlike language to an adult’s point of view to conform to its ideological and cultural values. Feral (2006, pp. 463-478) suggests that this is because the French subtitles seek to prioritise educational pedagogy over children’s preferences. Key to this chapter’s exploration of the subtitling of scariness is the figure of *Voldemort*.

#### Example 2 Scary Figure: Voldemort

(1) *Description of Scene: Voldemort, who is regarded as the most dangerous wizard, appears in a person with front and back faces and is trying to kill Harry Potter.*

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<sup>39</sup> Using the Latin alphabet, “拼音”, phonetically “pinyin”, belongs to the phonetic system of writing Mandarin Chinese. It accurately refers to the pronunciation of Mandarin characters (Liu and Wang 2002).

(2) Screen Shot:



Screen Shot -2 - Harry Fights with Voldemort

(3) Lines: *VOLDEMORT: Let me speak to him.*

*QUIRRELL: Master, you are not strong enough.*

*VOLDEMORT: I have strength enough for this.*

*Harry Potter...*

*...we meet again.*

*HARRY: Voldemort.*

(4) Translation: 让我和他谈谈

-主人，你还没恢复力量

-我的力量足以应付得了

哈利·波特...

我们又见面了

-伏地魔

(5) Back Translation: *VOLDEMORT: Let me speak to him.*

*QUIRRELL: Master, you are not fully recovered.*

*VOLDEMORT: I'm strong enough to deal with it.*

*Hali Bote...*

*We meet again.*

*HARRY: Hiding-under-the-ground monster.*

The name *Voldemort* has widely been associated with “flight from death”<sup>40</sup> (meaning escaping death) as *mort* is French for “death” (Bunker 2007). *Voldemort* is an unusual

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<sup>40</sup> Harry Potter fans discuss different interpretations on Voldemort that are available from a couple of websites:

name in English and in other European languages as well insofar it is a completely made-up name. Unless one is a French speaker, the connotation of death implicit in the name goes unrecognised. While the strangeness of the name is maintained in Chinese, the Chinese subtitle speaks the death which the English character name will not voice. In another contrast, whilst the English name, due to its French origin can be associated with death, the Chinese subtitles move in the opposite direction showing a character returning from death, rising from below the ground. Moreover, whilst *Voldemort* as a name triggers fear from its vague foreignness, the Chinese subtitles are significantly more specific, labelling the character as a monster: “伏地魔” / “Hiding-under-the-ground monster”. The strategy thus used is one of explanation and whilst a sense of scariness is conveyed by both names, that scariness functions differently. Another of the subtitled film’s fearful figure, *headless Nick*, offers a key insight into the subtitles’ intriguing use of foreignisation and domestication.

Example 3 Ferocious Ghost: Headless Nick

(1) *Description of Scene: Sir Nicholas, known after his death as Nearly Headless Nick, is now a resident ghost at Hogwarts’s as a result of a magic mishap.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -3 - Headless Nick

(3) *Line: RON: You’re nearly headless Nick.*

*NICK: I prefer Sir Nicholas, if you don’t mind.*

(4) *Translation: 你是差点没头的尼克*

*-我希望你能叫我尼古拉斯爵士*

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<https://www.quora.com/Why-did-J-K-Rowling-name-the-villain-Voldemort;>  
[http://www.funtrivia.com/askft/Question102875.html;](http://www.funtrivia.com/askft/Question102875.html)  
[https://scifi.stackexchange.com/questions/3218/etymology-of-the-name-voldemort.](https://scifi.stackexchange.com/questions/3218/etymology-of-the-name-voldemort)

(5) *Back Translation: RON: You are Nike who is nearly without head.*

*NICK: I hope you can call me Nigulasi Knight.*

The Chinese subtitles actually convey the humour of the original. A terrifying and gory ghost appeals, in his decapitated state, for the rules of mundane politeness to be applied. However, the translational interest in this subtitle lies in the names and titles. The name *Nicholas* appears in foreignised form as it is transliterated phonetically into Pinyin “Nigulasi”. Recognisable as a character name, it makes clear the foreign origin of the film being subtitled. More interestingly, the British honorary title *Sir* is translated as “爵士” / “knight” into Chinese. “爵士” / “knight” in Chinese refers to a “rank or title of nobility” (*C-E Dictionary*) which is used and recognised in Chinese culture. “爵士” / “knight” represents an interesting insight into the poles that foreignisation and domestication suggest because the original word, *Sir*, is a word noticeably foreign even while remaining domestically comprehensible in Chinese culture. According to Miao Xu and Yan Lin (2007, p. 82), while Chinese audiences are generally aware of the technical implications of being a *Sir* in British society, most of them are less familiar with the royal identity referring to its special social status. It underlines therefore that even when the subtitles foreignise a source word, what they offer in this case is a domesticated version of something which still remains ostensibly foreign.

To summarise, the above three examples illustrate that different translational and cultural strategies are used when conveying frightening factors in the source film. While equivalence was a key strategy when subtitling the name *Fluffy* into Chinese, equivalence was not ultimately achieved in relation to the subtitling of the name *Voldemort*, as the Chinese subtitles label and explain the name of a character which the film is so wary of speaking/naming. In contrast, the use of the term “爵士” (“knight”) opens debates about whether foreignisation and domestication are actually opposites or whether any foreignised version of a name in subtitles is in some way slightly domesticated.

#### 2.4.2. Smallness

According to Griswold, “smallness” is a key feature of children’s entertainment. He writes in particular on the conflation of size, power, and the magical transformation from smallness to triumph (Griswold 2006, p. 53). The goblins who guard the vaults at Gringotts



are small childlike characters who clearly belong to this category. Griswold's focus on smallness privileges the small, often magical or mystical creatures which so often feature in young children's literature. This section however will use Griswold's term elastically to consider not just magical figures but a magical key as well as children's small pets.

Example 4 Miniature Creatures: Goblins

(1) *Description of Scene: Hagrid is taking Harry to make a withdrawal, which was left by his parents. In Gringotts, the wizard bank, Potter first meets goblins, staff at the bank.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -4 - A Goblin Inside Gringotts Bank

(3) *Line: HARRY: What exactly are these things?*

*HAGRID: They're goblins, Harry.*

(4) *Translation: 那是什么怪物呀?*

*-那就是妖精, 哈利*

(5) *Back Translation: HARRY: What is that monster?*

*HAGRID: That definitely is evil spirit, Hali.*

The Chinese subtitles' choice in relation to their translation of the word *goblin* is revealing regarding the question of linguistic equivalence. That they seek equivalence is clear. They take an English word, *goblin*, defined as "a mischievous ugly dwarf-like creature of folklore" (*OED*) and they translate it as "妖精" / "evil spirit". Chinese has no direct word for *goblin*, but the subtitles could have chosen an associated equivalence, "小妖精" / "small evil spirit". The subtitles, however, in a manner interesting for Griswold's category of smallness, omit the first character meaning "small". The meaning of the Chinese word thus changes to mean "evil spirit". The omission of this word changes the nature of the item being discussed. Furthermore, the smallness of the *goblin* is visual on the screen, it

can therefore be omitted from the subtitles without the loss of meaning. If goblins in English are mischievous cheeky creatures of folklore, the Chinese “妖精” / “evil spirit” casts the diminutive staff at Gringotts in a demonic evil light which is completely at odds with their protective responsible role in the bank. In the Harry Potter film they are protectors against evil, in the subtitles, they are, in linguistic terms, the agents of evil.

**Example 5: A Small and Magical Key: The Little Devil**

(1) *Description of Scene: A key is requested by the goblin from young Harry to make a withdrawal. Hagrid has this key on him.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -5 - Hagrid Holding a Key

(3) *Line: HAGRID: Mr. Harry Potter wishes to make a withdrawal.*

*GOBLIN: And does Mr. Harry Potter have his key?*

*HAGRID: Wait a minute. Got it here somewhere.*

*Ha! There's the little devil.*

(4) *Translation: 哈利波特先生想要提钱*

*-哈利波特先生有带钥匙吗?*

*-噢, 等等, 就在身上*

*小鬼难缠*

(5) *Back Translation: HAGRID: Sir Hali Bote wants to withdraw money.*

*GOBLIN: Does Sir Hali Bote have the key?*

*HAGRID: Oh, wait, definitely on me.*

*The lackeys are even more difficult to deal with.*

Similar to Example 4, this example maintains Griswold's category and vocabulary of smallness. What it underlines is that the translation of the source text is not always merely

linguistic but rather cultural. In the English film the term *little devil* refers to the key which Hagrid is struggling to find. It is worth pointing out that the English expression *little devil* is a colloquial way of referring to an impish child (*OED*). In this scene, Hagrid personifies the key, referring to it jokingly as a little brat, because it has momentarily disappeared. However, the Chinese subtitles do make this colloquial and cultural transposition transferrable to the target culture into a Buddhist theological context, as Buddhism is the dominant religion of China. They translate *little devil* as “小鬼难缠”/ “The lackeys are even more difficult to deal with”. This Chinese idiom is a short-hand version of a fuller phrase which would be harder for the subtitles to accommodate; “阎王好见，小鬼难缠”/ “The lackeys are even more difficult to deal with than the Yama (Hindu god of death and lord of the underworld)” (*C-E Dictionary*). The subtitle transfers a casual colloquial expression (*little devil*) that goes largely unnoticed in the original film, with a culturally loaded reference (“小鬼难缠”/ “The lackeys are even more difficult to deal with”) in a Buddhist context. Having dealt with the small devils or difficulties in order to access his parents’ vault, Harry will consequently have to meet this film’s king of Hell, Voldemort as a result of the vault’s contents. Thus, the subtitles engage with the language and cultural context of the receiving culture, moving away from the linguistic content of the original in a way which predicts and engages with the film’s plot. If there is translation gain in cultural and linguistic terms in this example through the subtitles’ reference to a Chinese idiom, there is clear cultural and linguistic loss in the subtitles’ treatment of the section’s next small character: Ron’s pet rat.

#### Example 6 Small Animal: Scabbers

(1) *Description of Scene: Ron first met Harry on the train to Hogwarts’s School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and they are sharing their refreshments. While they are talking, the rat Scabbers is stealing their snacks.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -6 - The Rat Scabbers Stealing Sweets

(3) *Line: RON: This is Scabbers, by the way.*

(4) *Translation: 对了，这是斑斑*

(5) *Back Translation: RON: Yes, this is Banban.*

*Scabbers*, the name of the rat, is translated as “斑斑” / “Banban”. This back translates as “scar scar” (the Chinese subtitle repeats the word for *scar* in order to form a name which is recognisably that of a pet). Pet names in Chinese frequently have a repeated syllable or structure. However, while the subtitles manage to capture the pet-like context of the animal, they are forced in the process of cultural transfer to lose some of the key overtones of the character’s name. *Scabbers* as a name derives from the English verb *to scab*, meaning in highly colloquial language “to bum, beg or ask for something for free” (*OED*). The noun *scab* refers to the “hard covering of dried blood that forms over a wound to cover and protect it as it heals” (Merriam-Webster 2004). Therefore, the Chinese use of “斑斑” / “Banban” is in one sense appropriate in relation to replicating the cuteness. However, given the pilfering nature of the scene in which we first meet the rat (he is stealing sweets), it seems more likely that this translation loss is inevitable as Chinese does not have a word which encompasses the multiple meanings of the word *scab*. Unsurprisingly, the subtitles choose to translate the first meaning of the noun *scab* as defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989). The subtitles do not translate the lesser known, lower register, colloquial meaning of the verb *to scab*. The subtitles either do not translate this second meaning even though it is the more appropriate meaning in the context of the film and the character’s pilfering actions.

The subtitles regarding smallness indicate the range of cultural and linguistic strategies that the subtitles employ. Interestingly, when translating J.K. Rowling’s magical goblin

figures, the subtitles make alterations, recasting the fairly neutral English word *goblin* into a more evil Chinese equivalent. The terminology of fantasy thus does not cross national boundaries unaltered despite fantasy as a category often transcending national structures in its make-believe world. The category of smallness has also allowed us to underline the complex processes of cultural and linguistic loss and gain which frequently lie at the heart of the subtitling process in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

### 2.4.3. Flying

One of the five basic story mechanisms which Griswold (2006) suggests children find particularly compelling in literature is “lightness (opposite of heaviness) or flying”. While his work focuses on the very different trends in children’s literature in different national contexts, “flying and lightness”, Colleen Gillard (2016) suggests, are universal in their appeal: “all part of the serious business of make-believe”. Griswold suggests that the British do children’s fantasy like no other nation, citing Harry Potter’s world, a tale in which flying reaches new levels (Griswold 2006, p. 75), thanks to the *Nimbus 2000* broomstick. Multiple instances of flying appear in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, none though, are as prominent as the *Quidditch* scene.

#### Example 7 Flying Sport: Quidditch

(1) *Description of Scene: The students are having a Quidditch class, a wizarding flying sport played on broomstick. One of the students, Neville, falls on the grass and hurts himself, the teacher takes him to the hospital immediately. She commands the rest of the class not to play this sport before she comes back.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -7 - Neville on a Broomstick

(3) *Line: MADAM HOOCH: The one riding it will be expelled before they can say Quidditch.*

(4) Translation: 那在他还来不及见识到魁地奇, 就得给我滚出学校

(5) Back Translation: MADAM HOOCH: Then before he has not seen Quidiqi, one must get out of school.

Although *Quidditch* is an invented sport and a made-up word in the Harry Potter's context, there are clear overtones of Britishness in the original. *Quid* is slang for one-pound sterling, while *ditch* is also an English word for a narrow waterway at the side of a road or a field (OED). Therefore, the word sounds as though it could be English even while actually meaning nothing. The Chinese subtitles when describing this magical flying sport, phonetically transcribe the word into Chinese. They are thus faithful to this nonsense word in strictly denotational terms, as the Chinese transcription has no lexical meaning. As the word *Quidditch* is a fantastical unknown entity in the source film, the subtitles foreignise by phonetic transcription. They create a word which, in its strangeness, the scenes of the film have to explain and embody. However, the strangeness of the word *Quidditch* in English still has British overtones thanks to the presence and meaning of *quid* and *ditch*, even in their nonsensical association. Nonsense in this British word still paradoxically has some cultural meanings. The Chinese version, however, only finds meaning in its clearly very foreign nonsensical nature.

**Example 8 Flying Item: Nimbus 2000**

(1) Description of Scene: There is a newly released flying broomstick. The Nimbus 2000 attracts the attention of every student in Hogwarts's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

(2) Screen Shot:



Screen Shot -8 - The Nimbus 2000

(3) Line: BOY: It's a Nimbus 2000!

(4) Translation: 那是光轮 2000 !

(5) Back Translation: BOY: That is light (opposite of dark) wheel 2000!

The subtitle clearly underlines the cultural and linguistic challenges for the Chinese subtitles. The English word *nimbus* has multiple meanings. Its most obvious meaning is religious, “a bright cloud surrounding a deity” (*OED*). However, *nimbus* in English also refers to a series of research satellites, the last of which were launched in 1978. The satellite launched in 1978 was called Nimbus 7. By naming the flying machine *Nimbus 2000*, J.K. Rowling thus updates it to her contemporary era, transferring space-age technology to her children’s entertainment offering. Interestingly, most British viewers of the film would probably not have picked up the space reference, certainly not the child audience born long after the 1978 Nimbus. What this reveals is that J.K. Rowling’s work caters for multiple audiences, young and old in the choice of its language and cultural references. The Chinese subtitles cannot in this instance be as wide-ranging and multiple in their allusions. While there is a Chinese word for *nimbus*, “光圈” / “light (opposite of dark) ring”, the Chinese subtitles do not use it. Instead, they maintain the first character of the Chinese word for nimbus, “光” / “light” but add the character for wheel, “轮” / “wheel”, in order to gesture to the speed of the broomstick. The Chinese subtitles offer the audience a description of the broomstick in a name which even while it has meaning in Chinese via its component part is ultimately made up. What the Chinese subtitles translate is children’s fantasy rather than the linguistic specifics of the original dialogue line.

**Example 9 Flying Items: Different Balls in Quidditch**

(1) Description of Scene: A senior player, Oliver Wood, is explaining to Harry three different types of balls that are used in the wizarding game of Quidditch.

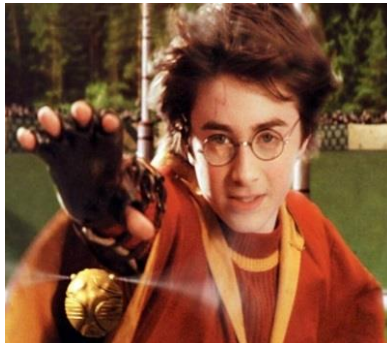
(2) Screen Shots:



Screen Shot -9 - Oliver Wood Holding a Quaffle



Screen Shot -10 - Oliver Wood Struggling with a Bludger



Screen Shot -11 - Harry Potter Seeking a Golden Snitch

(3) *Line: OLIVER: There are three kinds of balls.*

*This one's called the Quaffle.*

*...Bludger.*

*...The Golden Snitch.*

(4) *Translation: 总共有三种球*

*这叫做鬼飞球*

*游走球*

*金色飞贼*

(5) *Back Translation: OLIVER: In total, there are three kinds of ball.*

*This is called ghost flying ball.*



...Swimming and walking ball.

...Golden flying thief.

The Chinese subtitles adopt very different strategies both culturally and linguistically in relation to each of these flying balls. They take an English word which fundamentally has no fixed meaning, *quaffle*, and in its place they offer a name which is actually a description, “鬼飞球” / “ghost flying ball”, which alludes to the enchanted nature of the ball. *Quaffle*, as a word, sounds English even in its failure to mean anything specific. It sounds as though it references the English verb “to quaff” / “to drink deeply” (*OED*). The Chinese subtitles neutralise the English sound of the noun, stripping it off its connotation, and offer a phrase which domesticates the *quaffle* into a Chinese context. They offer a word which, even while made up, insists on a meaning for the audience.

While *bludger* appears to make reference to “a hanger-on; a loafer” (*OED*), the nature of J.K. Rowling’s description of this ball and its ability to knock players off their broomsticks mean that it has a closer association with the British noun *bludgeon* “a club with heavy end” or the verb *to bludgeon*, “to coerce” (*OED*). The *bludger* in Harry Potter’s world is one of the most dangerous balls because it is enchanted to attack the players and cause them to fall off their brooms. The Chinese subtitles neutralise entirely this violent linguistic meaning, conveying only the enchanted nature of the object.

While the first two examples in this ball section either domesticate or neutralise the meaning in subtitled form, interestingly a third example maintains both the cultural and linguistic meaning of the original. J.K. Rowling’s snitch ball is the smallest and most powerful of the balls. Its name clearly derives from the English verb *to snatch*, meaning “to steal” (*OED*). While it is the seeker’s job to steal this fast flying ball in order to win the game, the Chinese subtitles echo and translate precisely the vocabulary of theft, “金色飞贼” / “golden flying thief”. They maintain both the colour and the activity associated with this ball.

The flying objects so common in children’s fiction, as explored by Jerry Griswold, lie at the heart of Harry Potter’s fantasy. An analysis of their treatment of the Chinese subtitles is revealing. The Chinese subtitles adopt a range of strategies to cater for the needs of their audience. They transcribe *Quidditch* creating a nonsensical word which echoes the

foreignness of the British original. They explain the *Nimbus 2000* and domesticate the *quaffle*. If they lose the violent overtones of the *bludger*, they choose to maintain the thieving nature of the *snitch*. What these subtitles cumulatively make clear is that it is impossible to generalise one translational strategy for any given category of subtitles. The subtitles work dynamically across the source text at times adding, at times losing the linguistic and cultural presence of the original text.

#### 2.4.4. Aliveness

According to Griswold (2006, p. 103), children’s literature differs from adult literature in the way in which objects and things are frequently and magically animated. “Aliveness” or the animation of inanimate objects is a key feature of both children’s literature as a whole and the magical realm of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in particular. This chapter will now turn to analyse the subtitling of this category in our case study film.

#### Example 10 Moving Alley: Diagon Alley

(1) *Description of Scene: Hagrid is taking Harry to buy the equipment required by Hogwarts’s School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -12 - Hagrid in Diagon Alley

(3) *Line: HAGRID: Welcome, Harry, to Diagon Alley.*

(4) *Translation: 欢迎来到对角巷，哈利*

(5) *Back Translation: HAGRID: Welcome to the opposite angle alley, Hali.*

Griswold’s category of “aliveness” is embodied in the moving walls of *Diagon Alley*, the inanimate objects which take on a magical life force to admit customers. The English name of the street is a cheeky play on words as *Diagon Alley* phonetically sounds out the English

adverb “diagonally” as defined in *OED*: “joining two opposite corners of a square, rectangle, or other straight-sided shape”. The Chinese subtitles convey the meaning of “Diagonal”, but they lose the pun and play on words. Interestingly, a comparison of the Japanese and Vietnamese subtitles reveals a highly comparable strategy as meaning is conveyed at the expense of word play (Pringle 2007). While it is arguable that many Anglophone readers might not pick up J.K. Rowling’s word play in her naming of *Diagon Alley*, the spoken name in the film makes the allusion more noticeable or audible. The Chinese subtitles, given their written form, have to move further away from the play on words. They convey language content but not playful style.

Griswold’s category “aliveness” marks the subtitling of the moving alley in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. The Chinese subtitles adopt a sense-for-sense translation as they convey the meaning of *Diagon Alley* but not J.K. Rowling’s play on words. The subtitling strategy in relation to place names, albeit fictional ones, is markedly different from the previous example (*Quidditch*) employed transliteration. However, only one example from this category has been analysed. More “aliveness” examples with particular reference to “magic” will therefore be discussed in the next extended category.

#### 2.4.5. Magic

Griswold’s interpretation of children’s literature does not include magic as a category. Magic, though, might be seen as an extension of Griswold’s category of “aliveness”. Magic is the key to both the novel and the Harry Potter film. It is also key to the subtitling process because the film’s spells offer a particular challenge in linguistic and cultural terms for the subtitler. Those writings on magic in literature identify starkly different strategies in the national literatures of Britain and China. Chun-chiang Yen (1967, p. 45) suggests that traditional Chinese stories tend to be rooted in folklore. Lee Simmons and Robert Schindler (2003, p. 102) suggest that in Chinese culture and literature, there is an inner harmony between human activities, nature and the supernatural. In contrast, according to Colleen Gillard (2016), British culture is far more fantastical and open to embracing far-flung myths and legends that appeal to the furthest reaches of children’s imagination. Harry Potter’s world as a cultural object might therefore interestingly be seen as sitting mid-way between the trends of both China and Britain for while it depicts a magical

supernatural world of fantasy and amazement, it is also resolutely situated in a domestic and known world, a world comforting in its Britishness. Despite the fact that the Harry Potter books and films are set against a very marked British cultural background, they clearly reflect an intracultural communication that is full of references to aspects of British life that were expected to be perfectly familiar to the original audience and initially, to an audience of British children (Davies 2003, p. 67).

**Example 11 Magical Spell: Water into Rum**

(1) *Description of Scene: Seamus, one of Harry's classmates, is trying to do a magic trick to turn the water into rum. He is casting the following spell.*

(2) *Line: SEAMUS: Eye of rabbit, harp string hum.*

*Turn this water into rum.*

*Eye of rabbit, harp string hum...*

(3) *Translation: 兔眼溜溜, 竖琴悠悠*

*把这清水变美酒*

*兔眼溜溜, 竖琴悠悠...*

(4) *Back Translation: SEAMUS: Spinning rabbit eye, drifting harp sound.*

*Turn this clear water into beautiful wine.*

*Spinning rabbit eye, drifting harp sound...*

The spells in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* challenge the subtitler. It is necessary not just to convey content but also style and the specific nursery rhyme structure of the original. Pauline Harris and Barbra McKenzie (2005, p. 2) argue that children engage more fully with rhymes in which patterns and connections are intersected. Nursery rhymes are used to improve children's ability to read in the Chinese context (Taylor 2002, p. 8). In the English original *rum* and *hum*, appearing at the end of two successive lines tie the spell together, mark the speech specifically as a spell and deliver the pleasure of an aesthetic poetic sound. According to Harris and McKenzie (2005, p. 2), the sound builds on the assumption of a young audience's frequent encounter with lullabies and nursery rhymes. While the subtitles translate the rhyme scheme to mark the speech as a spell, they alter the spell's ingredients both to domesticate the spell's content for Chinese consumption and to ensure a rhyming structure in Chinese at the end of the subtitles, “溜溜” / “spinning

spinning” and “悠悠” / “drifting drifting”. Repetition is often an integral part of Chinese rhyme structures to reinforce effect (Arleo 2006, p. 18). The Chinese subtitles thus create a repetitive effect to replace the end rhyme embedded in this source text (*hum* and *rum*). Interestingly, in so doing this first spell acquires additional English cultural and Christian overtones. In the original dialogue, Seamus tries to turn water into rum. For reasons of rhyme and cultural familiarity, the Chinese subtitles substitute one alcoholic beverage for another. Seamus in Chinese tries, like Jesus, to turn water into wine. The transformation of water into wine at the wedding at Cana is the first miracle attributed to Jesus in *the Gospel of John*. When the wine runs out, Jesus shows his glory by making water become wine. Humour is thus generated in the Chinese version in a way it is not in the English original as while Jesus showed his power turning water into wine, Seamus’s endeavours meet nothing but spectacular failure. If the English *rum* is domesticated into the more prevalent Chinese character “美酒” / “beautiful wine”<sup>41</sup>, so too is the harp. While harps do exist in Chinese culture, the subtitles domesticate the meaning of the original by transferring it into a specifically Chinese string instrument “竖琴” / “harp”.

**Example 12 Magical Spell: Turn Rat Yellow**

(1) *Description of Scene: Ron is showing Harry the magic to turn a rat yellow, while Hermione is passing by and stops to see the magic. The two of them are Harry’s companions.*

(2) *Line: HERMIONE: Oh, are you doing magic?*

*Let’s see, then.*

*RON: Sunshine, daisies, butter mellow.*

*Turn this stupid, fat rat yellow.*

(3) *Translation: 喔，你在施魔法吗？*

*让我们瞧一瞧吧*

*-阳光，雏菊，黄油香香*

*快快把这笨肥鼠变黄*

(4) *Back Translation: HERMIONE: Oh, are you casting magic?*

*Let us have a look.*

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<sup>41</sup> Sweet wine refers to many kinds of alcohol in China ranging from grape wine, rice wine, etc.

*RON: Sunshine, young daisy, sweet sweet butter.*

*Quick, quick, make this stupid fat rat become yellow.*

The treatment of the spell provides a similarity with the previous one by proposing repetition for the rhyme scheme. The Chinese translation of the previous spell “to turn water into rum” domesticates the elements in the spell and preserved the rhyme scheme, this spell also maintains the equivalent ingredients as well as the rhyme structure. The only translational alteration comes in relation to the transformation of butter mellow into “黄油香香” (“sweet sweet butter”) in Chinese. The subtitles thus adopt a strategy of equivalence. Butter is comparatively rare in contemporary Chinese culture, sold largely only in foreign specialist supermarkets. It is what is consumed on western bread by the younger generation and is both far more recognisable and available. The subtitles, therefore, target a younger generation with a product which, while still foreign just like the film which they are consuming, remains culturally legible to them. The rhyming structure of the spell appears, the spell remains legible as a spell as the dialogue prefaces it as one. The translation loss in this respect is thus minimal.

**Example 13 Magical Spell: *Lacarnum Inflamarae***

(1) *Description of Scene: Harry is playing a key role in the competition of Quidditch, however, he behaves strangely. Ron and Hermione find out that it is Snape who is casting a spell on Harry leading to his bad performance.*

(2) *Line: HAGRID: What’s going on with Harry’s broomstick?*

*HERMIONE: It’s Snape. He’s jinxing the broom!*

*RON: Jinxing the broom? What do we do?*

*HERMIONE: Leave it to me.*

*RON: Come on, Hermione!*

*HERMIONE: Lacarnum Inflamarae.*

*MAN: Fire!*

*You’re on fire!*

(3) *Translation: 哈利的扫帚怎么啦?*

*-是斯内普, 他在对扫帚下咒*

*-对扫帚下咒? 我们该怎么办?*

-交给我吧  
-快点啊，赫敏  
-拉卡隆，依佛摩瑞  
-着火了  
你身上着火了

(4) *Back Translation: HAGRID: How is Hali's broomstick?*

*HERMIONE: Must be Sineipu, he is casting magic to broomstick.*

*RON: Casting magic to broomstick? What should we do?*

*HERMIONE: Leave it to me.*

*RON: Quickly, Hemin.*

*HERMIONE: Lakalong, yifomorui.*

*MAN: On fire.*

*You are on fire.*

The spell detail in Example 13 offers an interesting contrast to that in Example 12 as the strategy of equivalence is not possible in translational terms. J.K. Rowling's original spell sounds like Latin, although the vast majority of British children no longer study Latin. In English, the traces of Latin permeate the discourse of medicine, biology, botany and are often recognisable as Latin even to those who have never studied the language. They identify the object being discussed as potentially erudite or scientific and deliberately obscure. Hermione's spell appears to be drawing on the Latin noun *lacerna* which refers to a cloak, as well as *inflammare*, the Latin verb meaning "to ignite and to inflame" (Smith and Lockwood 1976). Accordingly, the spell can be taken to mean "to set fire to a cloak", the fate which befalls Snape in the scene. To the general audience, however, the words sound merely like an erudite spell in a foreign language reminiscent of Latin, but clearly not of the every-day world. The Chinese subtitles cannot mimic the use of Latin in the spell, for Chinese does not have the same link with Latin as a reference language. The subtitles could potentially have used "古文", an older classical Chinese used in highbrow literature and science. However, they choose simply to transliterate the original words. The subtitles create a spell whose terms and sounds are clearly not of the Chinese domestic context. They thus translate the strangeness of the original, mimicking its foreignness even while losing its Latin meaning. It is shown that this complicated spell is

transferable in term of phonetics while the learned association and the alluded lexical meaning drawing on Latin of the spell are untranslatable to a young Chinese audience.

In summary, the Chinese subtitles of incantatory spells in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* suggest distinct strategies and indicate that different approaches are frequently adopted even when translating instances relating to the same phenomenon in the film. Domestication was employed when Seamus tries to turn water into rum, as the subtitles bring British fantasy into the Chinese cultural context. When Ron casts a spell on a rat, the subtitles offer a strategy of equivalence, as repetition is employed to make the source text's end rhyme transferrable with the Chinese rhyming structure. The spell to set Snape on fire underlines the hidden power of transliteration in the subtitles of this film to use strangeness as a signifier in itself. This strangeness of the film's original word, which vaguely references the Latin language, is transferrable to the target culture as the Chinese audiences hardly have any knowledge of the Latin. The Chinese subtitles convey the strangeness and foreignness of the source spell, while losing its Latin specificities.

#### 2.4.6. Corporeal Humour

According to *The New York Times Books Review*, Harry Potter books are filled with thrilling humour (Valero Garcés 2003, p. 122), particularly with the aim to please a child audience. While Griswold makes no reference to humour in his book on children's fiction, so prevalent is it in Harry Potter film that it needs to be considered in the Chinese subtitles. This section of my chapter will focus specifically on corporeal humour. The section explores how flavours of sweets are named after bodily secretions cross from English into Chinese. The corporeal humour present in the strange tasting sweets is of significance to examine as it generates humour for the target audience. Two related occurrences will be analysed accordingly to explore how this ambiguity is preserved or removed in the target text and how far this humour travels to Chinese culture.

#### Example 14 Bodily flavours: Bogey-Flavour

(1) *Description of Scene: Ron and Harry are talking about Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans which include every possible flavour. The film discusses chocolate, peppermint, and more fantastic flavours such as spinach, liver, and tripe.*



(2) *Line: RON: They mean every flavour. There's chocolate and peppermint and also... spinach, liver and tripe. George swore (sic) he got a bogey-flavoured one once.*

(3) *Translation: 这表示所有口味都有, 有巧克力和薄荷口味, 也有…菠菜, 肝脏, 还有牛肚, 乔治有次还吃到鼻涕口味*

(4) *Back Translation: RON: This means that all flavours are included, including chocolate and mint, also...spinach, liver, and also tripe. Qiaozhi once ate nasal mucus flavour.*

What the subtitles reveal in this instance is that children's humour is often transferrable across cultures and linguistic barriers when it relates to bodily functions. There is in the subtitles a change of register. The English word *bogey* is a child-like word for the discharge from one's nose. The Chinese subtitles offer a more generalised word for the substance, a word of accepted usage by both adults and children. The change of register has little effect on the humour which derives from the disgusting idea of eating something mucous flavoured. Interestingly, the language of the English original codes itself as childlike by having Ron use an incorrect past tense. He utters *swore* in place of "swore". The Chinese subtitles correct or rather omit this error, paradoxically offering a "false" version of the original by translating it into correct Chinese. However, as Chinese lacks temporal system with its corresponding morphology, this "correction" is almost practically inevitable.

#### **Example 15 Bodily Flavour: Ear Wax**

(1) *Description of Scene: Professor Dumbledore is comforting and amusing Harry by randomly choosing the disgusting flavour of earwax. He then exclaims "Alas", using an elevated, archaic register to trigger comic effect.*

(2) *Line: PROFESSOR DUMBLEDORE: But I think I could be safe...with a nice toffee. Alas! Earwax.*

(3) *Translation: 可是我想应该可以选颗…太妃糖口味的天哪!是耳屎*

(4) *Back Translation: PROFESSOR DUMBLEDORE: But I think that I am able to choose a...toffee flavour. Heaven ah! Ear wax.*

The subtitles to this scene underline that humour, when it is bodily, can often be directly transferred across languages and cultures. The idea of consuming an ear wax flavoured sweet is comic in both English and Chinese, perhaps due to a shared taboo regarding the

consumption of bodily by-products and the corresponding perception of ear wax being disgusting. The existence of ear wax as a bodily product and shared human experience means that Dumbledore's words can largely be carried over into Chinese in equivalent form. The largest change in the dialogue relates to the translation of the word *Alas*, which stands out in English for its dramatic archaic overtones. These dramatic archaic overtones are neutralised in Chinese in the saying “天哪”/ “heaven ah”. This colloquial exclamation “天哪”/ “heaven ah” has no practical meaning. It also equates to “我的妈呀” (“Oh, my mum”) that is used to express speaker's astonishment (EChineseLearning 2015). While the humour generated in English by the disjunction between the bodily sweet and the archaic theatrical register is lost, the comedy of eating something disgusting remains.

The Chinese translation relating to corporeal humour reveals that equivalence is often possible in linguistic and cultural terms when it relates to body parts and their universal by-products. While in both examples there is some translation loss in relation to the question of register (*bogey* becomes “mucus”, *Alas* becomes “heaven ah”), the core humour relating to bodily functions is translated in equivalent form.

#### 2.4.7. Childlike Appellation

J.K. Rowling is known for her careful, playful and often erudite use of names (Kroulek 2011). It is therefore essential to assess the use of names in the subtitles. As has been noted already in the course of this chapter, the subtitles often simply transliterate names. However, this process is not uniform (we will see the explanative version of Draco Malfoy's name in the version from Taiwan). This section will assess the subtitling strategies of the film in relation to child-like forms of address and pets.

#### Example 16 Childlike Appellation: Pumpkin

(1) *Description of Scene: This scene marks the birthday of Harry's cousin, Dudley, whose mother tries hard to please him by purchasing two more presents.*

(2) *Line: PETUNIA: We're going to buy you two new presents. How's that, pumpkin?*

(3) *Translation: 我们去买新的两份礼物给你, 怎么样, 我的小乖乖?*

(4) *Back Translation: PETUNIA: We are going to buy two new presents for you, how is that, my little well-behaved?*

English uses *pumpkin* as an affectionate term of address often for children as well as using it to describe a common plant and its edible fruit (*OED*). While the Chinese language has a word for this plant and fruit (“南瓜” / “pumpkin”), Chinese does not use the word to refer to people. The subtitles however translate the function of the word as a term of endearment rather than its referential content. They translate pumpkin as “小乖乖” / “the little well-behaved”, a term of endearment commonly used in Chinese. There is thus referential loss but functional equivalence. Additionally, *pumpkin* as a pet name also implies roundness-relevant for Dudley. This implication is also lost in the Chinese subtitles when translating Dudley’s physical appearance.

**Example 17 Unattractive Animal: Fang**

(1) *Description of Scene: Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Draco are receiving a detention for walking outside at night. Hagrid and his dog named Fang, accompany them to complete the detention.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -13 - The Dog Fang

(3) *Line: DRACO: Okay. Then I get Fang.*

*HAGRID: Fine.*

*Just so you know, he’s a bloody coward.*

(4) *Translation: 那我带牙牙一起去*

*-好吧*

*不过你要小心，它是个胆小鬼*

(5) *Back Translation: DRACO: Then I take Yaya together.*

*HAGRID: Fine.*

*But you have to be careful, it is a timid ghost.*

*Fang*, in English, is a very sharp tooth which has the potential to devour people and is used for biting and tearing flesh (*OED*). It is therefore a potentially vicious name. Interestingly, the Chinese subtitles do not transliterate and instead create an affectionate name “牙牙” (“Yaya”). These Chinese characters translate phonetically as “牙牙” (“Yaya”), a phonetic repetition which symbolises that the name refers to a pet that can intensify owner’s praise and encouragement (Sachweh 1998, p. 57). However, the character “牙” / “Ya” also literally means “tooth” in Chinese. They thus transfer some of the referential content of the original. There is thus something of a semantic clash in the Chinese subtitles as the phonetic repetition codes the name in an endearing, sweet register while the referential meaning of the name is potentially more violent. Interestingly, the comparatively mild expletive in the English dialogue *bloody*, a term which connotes annoyance or is used as an intensifier, is omitted from the Chinese. The Chinese subtitles neutralise the coarse slang for their young Chinese audiences.

**Example 18 Made-up Word: Muggle**

(1) *Description of Scene: As Hagrid is breaking into Harry’s temporary house, Uncle Vernon is fighting against Hagrid’s rudeness. Hagrid teases him about the useless fight.*

(2) *Line: HAGRID: A great Muggle like you is going to stop him?*

*HARRY: Muggle?*

*HAGRID: Non-magic folk.*

(3) *Translation: 你以为像你这种超级大麻瓜阻止得了他吗?*

*-麻瓜?*

*-就是不会魔法的家伙*

(4) *Back Translation: HAGRID: You think like you this kind of super Magua (twisted melon) can stop him?*

*HARRY: Magua (Twisted melon)?*

*HAGRID: It refers to guys who cannot do magic.*

The Chinese subtitles’ rendering of *muggle* is perhaps the translation that is most in tune with J.K. Rowling’s original as the name works in Chinese on a variety of levels. At first glance, the subtitle appears simply to transliterate the English original as “麻瓜” / “Magua”. The English original is a made-up word, a word which only has meaning within

Harry Potter's universe, describing as it does a human being with no magic powers. The Chinese subtitles' transliteration is thus appropriate insofar as it conveys the strangeness of the original. However, there is clear translation gain in the Chinese subtitles as the transliteration "Magua" ("twisted melon") actually produces Chinese characters which have a meaning, albeit a fantastical one in Chinese<sup>42</sup>.

What these three examples relating to childlike appellation underline is that the subtitling approach in this film is a dynamic one. While characters' names, when they are human, are often transliterated, childlike terms of endearment like *pumpkin* are generally domesticated. The analysis of the referential equivalence achieved in the rendering of the name *Fang* by the Chinese subtitles, reveals the semantic incongruity which such acts of translation may trigger. The name in Chinese is sweet in its repetitive structure yet potentially vicious in its meaning. Where the Chinese subtitles simply transliterate another made-up word *muggle*, the discussion tends to expose the cultural resonances and translation gains which such acts of transliteration can trigger.

#### 2.4.8. Other Made-up Names

J.K. Rowling provides an imaginative adventures with her readers via the made-up words embedded in Harry Potter's fantastic world (Lerer 2009, p. 4). This section therefore considers whether the made-upness travels to Chinese culture with a particular reference to key made-up names (personal names and house names).

#### Example 19: House Names and Characters' Names

(1) *Description of Scene: Professor McGonagall is telling the new pupils that they will be sorted momentarily by the Sorting Hat into different houses. She places the Sorting Hat on Malfoy.*

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<sup>42</sup> Intriguingly, while this association of words in Chinese means little other than to signal the strangeness and fantasticness of Harry Potter's world, when back translated into English they do mean something, specifically in urban slang. As highlighted in the Happy Monday's song *Step on*, "twisting my melon" means to confuse somebody to the point of annoyance (Peckham 2009). The play of unintentional meanings in the translational act of this subtitle underlines the multiple cultural and linguistic overtones at work in a way that harmonises with the word play so characteristic of J. K. Rowling. This above observation is not strictly relevant to the analysis of how the name has been translated into Chinese. It is purely speculative (and quite unlikely) that subtitlers should make translation decisions based on what their TT means when back translated into the original language.

(2) Screen Shot:



Screen Shot -14 - Professor McGonagall Placing the Sorting Hat on Malfoy

(3) Line: MCGONAGALL: *Hermione Granger.*

HERMIONE: *Oh, no.*

*Okay, relax.*

RON: *Mental, that one, I'm telling you.*

SORTING HAT: *Right.*

*Then, right. Okay.*

*Gryffindor!*

.....

MCGONAGALL: *Draco Malfoy.*

SORTING HAT: *Slytherin!*

(4) Translation: 赫敏·格兰杰

-喔，不！

好吧，别紧张

-我告诉你，那家伙头脑有问题

-好，放轻松

-很好

嗯，好！

决定了

格兰芬多

.....

-德拉科·马尔福

-斯莱特林

(5) Back Translation: MCGONAGALL: *Hemin Gelanjie.*

*HERMIANE: Oh, no.*

*Okay, don't be nervous.*

*RON: I am telling you, that guy has problem.*

*SORTING HAT: Okay, take it easy.*

*Very good.*

*En, okay.*

*Decided.*

*Gelanfenduo.*

.....

*MAGONAGALL: Delake Ma'erfu.*

*SORTING HAT: Silaitelin.*

An inanimate object, a hat, takes on a magical life force to sort the pupils into houses in a process where names are highly revealing. In keeping with J.K. Rowling's careful play on the multiple and often historical meanings of seemingly made-up words, both the names of her characters and the houses into which they are sorted mean something both on a linguistic and cultural level. The Chinese subtitles thus have to grapple with these multiple levels of language, adopting specific strategies to capture what they can offer the meaning of the source film. *Gryffindor* is a prime example. A made-up word in English, the word still has the ability to mean as a result of its close relationship with English words and sounds. In English a *griffin* is "a fabulous creature with an eagle's head and wings and a lion's body" (OED). The Sorting Hat, the inanimate object comes alive in a fantastical manner to speak of a house which is equally fantastical in its mythical origins. The Chinese subtitles choose to transliterate the sounds of the word *Gryffindor*, "格兰芬多"/"Gelanfenduo". The subtitles thus offer the school house a name which is clearly foreign. The name has no meaning in Chinese even in its component parts. However, even in its nonsensicalness the Chinese subtitle still has the power to mean because it transliterates the foreignness of its source. The subtitle gestures towards the fantastical strangeness of Harry Potter's world by transliterative strategies which produce names that are fantastic and strange in Chinese. Thus, if the English names find meaning via their association with nouns and things in the English language, the Chinese names find a different, non-lexical meaning via their strange sounding incomprehensibility.

The name *Draco Malfoy* also provides a challenge for the subtitles. The character's first and last names both have cultural and linguistic meanings which consciously or subconsciously have the ability to shape our perception of the characters. The character's first name *Draco* has a cultural meaning in English. It refers to "a large constellation (dragon), stretching around the north celestial pole. It has no bright stars" (*OED*), alluding to the darkness of the sinister character. The word also refers to an Athenian legislator notorious for his severity, from whom derives the English adjective *draconic*. The character's surname is even more interesting but this time in linguistic terms. J.K. Rowling's names thus operate on a highly sophisticated cultural level, referencing sources which would not be easily or immediately accessible to much of the cinema audiences, particularly the younger children. To further complicate things, the anglicised pronunciation in the film further obscures the reference to old French phrase for "bad faith" ("mal foy"). While the cultural and linguistic meaning of the English names for this character are not transferred into the Chinese subtitles which again simply transliterate the sound of the original name, the translation loss of the negative facets of this character are not necessarily self-evident in the comprehension of the source audience. Translation loss is thus a nearly impossible thing to gauge because it entails specifying audience comprehension of a film which caters to multiple meanings, audiences and intellects. Interestingly, the Chinese transliterative approach to this character's name is not replicated by subtitles in other languages. The subtitles from Taiwan relating to this character are key case in point. They name the character "拽哥马份" which back translates as "cool brother Mafen". Choosing to transliterate the character's surname they offer a cultural reading of this character as his first name. In the play of cultural and linguistic meaning that constitutes J.K. Rowling's naming system, the dark and negative character overtones which characterise *Malfoy* are echoed in the name of the house into which the Sorting Hat places him.

The name *Slytherin* references both the English adjective "sly" and the verb "slither", referencing the deceitful and snake-like character of the individual. The Chinese subtitles again transcribe the name phonetically "斯莱特林"/ "Silaitelin". This act of transcription makes us think about the multiple meanings of fidelity in subtitling. The subtitles are unfaithful to the cultural meaning of the word *Slytherin* but they are faithful in very literal



terms to its sound and its linguistic strangeness. Fidelity, it appears, is always a choice, but subtitlers have to choose the aspect of the original to which they seek to be faithful. Total cultural and linguistic fidelity is rarely possible.

In summary, the subtitles use different strategies in relation to the made-up names in Harry Potter's magical world. Personal names and houses names in the Chinese subtitles tend to be transliterated. While these acts of transliteration entail cultural loss (many of the cultural allusions which help shape our perception of characters cannot be conveyed via this subtitling strategy), the transliteration strategy also offers some gains. In the clear foreignness of the names that this transliteration creates, the subtitles allude both to the foreignness of the English source text and to the strangeness of Harry Potter's supernatural world.

## 2.5. Conclusion

Using four of the five recurrent themes in children's literature identified by Griswold (2006), as well as adding four further categories ("magic, corporeal humour, childlike appellation and other made-up names"), this chapter has sought to analyse the specificities of subtitling for Chinese children in the film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001). What it has revealed is that while we teach and publish on translation theory in distinct and isolated blocks, the subtitles to Harry Potter film adopt a more dynamic approach to the subtitling process in theoretical terms. While it might be expected that they would domesticate heavily for their young Chinese audiences, multiple foreignising instances have been detected, particularly in the transliteration of personal names. Such acts of foreignisation via transliteration are however unlikely to unsettle the young Chinese audiences for they are part and parcel of Chinese subtitling norms. Moreover, such acts of transliteration are not only faithful to the sounds of the English original, but also carry over the strangeness of the sounds, which applies equally to the English and the Chinese contexts. They echo the other-worldly fantasy of the original with its magical strangeness. J. K. Rowling's original is known for its play on words and their multiple meanings. While that play cannot often be translated by the Chinese subtitles, it is interesting to note the ways in which the Chinese subtitles in their frequent acts of transliteration gain multiple meanings of their own. Although subtitles clearly privilege

comprehension on the part of their child audience, the subtitling process, shaped as it is by cultural, linguistic and technological constraints, at times creates subtitles which work on multiple levels and resonate for different audiences. In China, as in Britain the audience for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) is not solely confined to children. In a sense, the fantastical nature of J. K. Rowling's fictional world might be seen to make the subtitling task easier. Many of the names, places, processes and nouns in the original British film are made up. Their madeupness empowers the subtitles to be similarly creative and inventive in their strategies to transfer meaning. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001) offers a key case study in subtitled form for the field of subtitling in the Chinese context. It does so as a result of its dual adult and child audiences and as a result of the fact that it is a film which is at once very British in its culture, almost supra-national in its fantasy and clearly accommodates for a Chinese audience in its subtitles. Therefore, it raises key questions about the border between countries in multiple ways.

### 3. Subtitling a Political Film: Linguistic and Ideological Transfer in *The Iron Lady* (2011)

#### 3.1. Aim of the Chapter

This chapter will explore how British and Chinese politics shape the subtitling practice in the film *The Iron Lady* (2011). It will focus specifically on the Chinese subtitles of the officially released version of *The Iron Lady* (2011) in terms of linguistic and ideological transfer. The key questions are whether and how the Chinese subtitles mediate the politics of the first female Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher. The chapter also considers how subtitling works in the contemporary Chinese political context. More importantly, the chapter explores the mediation of the politics of Margaret Thatcher in the Chinese subtitles via the various rhetorical strategies used to render them. One of the key translation choices Chinese subtitles specifically offer is the four-character idioms known as “成语” (“chengyu”), which were widely used in classical Chinese and are still common in Chinese writing today. “Chengyu” stand out because they do not follow the usual grammatical structure and syntax of modern spoken Chinese. They are highly compact and aesthetic (Zhao et al. 2013, p. 2) and are used to denote Thatcher’s political stance in *The Iron Lady*.

The chapter will draw on Jonathan Charteris-Black’s (2005, pp. 168-194) analysis of the different rhetorical structures which characterise political speech. Focusing on Charteris-Black’s analysis of the strategies key to Thatcher’s discourse, the chapter will evaluate the way in which these strategies are or are not replicated by the Chinese subtitles. Charteris-Black’s analysis of Thatcher’s political rhetoric will be contrasted with Meifang Zhang’s (2016, p. 18) incisive study, *Political Discourse and Translation: Focusing on Translation of President Xi’s Public Addresses*, on the rhetorical structures which lie at the heart of Chinese President Xi’s major speeches in *The Governance of China*<sup>43</sup>. When read in association, Charteris-Black and Meifang Zhang offer a clear sense of the different political

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<sup>43</sup> This book is a recent official publication compiling Xi Jinping’s major addresses from November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012, when he took office, to June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, including excerpts or full texts of speeches, talks, interviews, Communist Party instructions and correspondence (Zhang 2016, p. 13).

rhetorical contexts which the film's subtitles need to bridge.

### 3.2. The Politics of Margaret Thatcher

As *The Iron Lady* focuses on Margaret Thatcher and her politics, an overview of her politics is necessary for the progression of this chapter. In office from 1979 to 1990, Margaret Thatcher was the longest serving Prime Minister of the Twentieth Century. One of the twentieth century's most famous and influential women, Thatcher came from a humble social background as a grocer's daughter to fight through class and gender barriers to make her voice heard in a male-dominated world (Blundell 2008, p. 193). Andrew Marr (2007), the BBC political commentator, describes her as "a one-woman revolution, a hurricane in human form, she would go on to transform Britain more radically than any prime minister since the Second World War". While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to describe in detail the complexity of Thatcher's political stance, her biographer Hugo Young (1993, p. 604) offers a highly useful summary:

She saw a smaller state, a more market-oriented economy, a citizenry required to make more choices of its own. She wanted weaker unions, stronger businessmen, an enfeeblement of collective provision and greater opportunities for individual self-help. All of these she succeeded in filling with a sense of moral purpose, which proved that she was, in some sense, right, and socialists were with equal certainty wrong. In the round, she was determined to erase socialism from the British agenda.

As Young suggests (1993, p. 604), Thatcher's governing ideology focused on the containment of communism and on maintaining freedom of citizenship by sustainable market-oriented business where individuals financially support themselves. In the realm of diplomacy, Thatcher was regarded as a powerful leader who could save Britain from its fate as the sick man of Europe (Gilmour 1992, p. 37). She was seen as the means to restore Britain's position as a proud, self-confident and competent nation in the international arena. Under her leadership during the Falklands crisis, British troops expelled Argentina's troops from the British Overseas Territory to proclaim full sovereignty. Her influential personal relations with Presidents Reagan of the USA and Gorbachev of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, were milestones along the road to the transformation of Britain's international standing (Seldon and Collings 2000, pp. 82-83). Thatcher is, Riddell suggests (1991, p. 67), one of the most exceptional Conservative Prime Ministers in the twentieth century. Part of her success, Seldon and Collings (2000, p. 66) suggest, stems

from her fiscal policy which mastered the economic chaos by means of tax reform, privatisation and restriction of Trade Union power which, under her premiership, established long-term economic strength. Thatcher, though, remains a controversial figure. She radically disagreed with Europe and the European Exchange Rate Mechanism to centralise Europe which caused severe disputes with the rest of the world (Seldon and Collings 2000, p. 59). Geoffrey Howe, the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, disparaged Thatcher's European stance as: "It is rather like sending your opening batsmen to crease, only for them to find, the moment the first balls are bowled, that their bats have been broken before the game by the team captain" (Bryant 2012, p. 1). His later resignation was a fatal attack on Thatcher's premiership (Bryant 2012, p. 1). Moreover, in a home context many of her economic and social policies prove highly controversial.

### 3.3. Thatcher's Relationship with China

In order to understand why this film was chosen to be released and subtitled in China, it is necessary to consider Thatcher's relationship with China. Thatcher played a key role in Anglo-Chinese relations, especially in relation to the status of Hong Kong. The British acquired Hong Kong in 1841 as the expansion of territory because China lost the Opium War<sup>44</sup>. This acquisition was part of Britain's broader expansion (Munn 2013, pp. 22-23). Dating from 1949, the confidential agreement established the following rules in relation to Hong Kong: (1) It was not to be used as a base for military operations against China; (2) activities in Hong Kong must not bring the Chinese communist government into disrepute; and (3) the safety of Chinese citizens in Hong Kong must be guaranteed<sup>45</sup>. When the colonial rule in Hong Kong came to an end, Thatcher paid a historic visit to Beijing with Deng Xiaoping<sup>46</sup>, in September 1983. China was the first Communist state Thatcher had

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<sup>44</sup> Provoked by Britain, the Opium War weakened the Qing dynasty and forced China to trade unequally with the rest of the world from the mid-nineteenth century (Pletcher 2015).

<sup>45</sup> See "1949 Nian, Wo Jun Wei He Bu Gong Zhan Xianggang" ("Why Our Army Did Not Occupy Hong Kong in 1949"), Chengshi dangjian [Urban party building], Organization and Propaganda Departments of the Hubei Provincial CCP Committee, Wuhan, No.1 (1997), p.45.

<sup>46</sup> First appointed as the former General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping became a Chinese Communist leader who was the most powerful figure from the late 1970s until his death in 1997. He attempted to incorporate the free-enterprise system and other reforms into Chinese economy. Under his leadership, China experienced rapid economic growth (Baum 1996, p. 48).

visited and she was the first British Prime Minister to visit China. During their meeting, she sought agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC) to retain a British presence in the territory. Deng restated the sovereignty of Hong Kong was non-negotiable to China, and he was unwilling to negotiate the sovereignty issue with Britain. Both governments finally agreed to maintain the PRC government and signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration in Beijing in 1984, agreeing to hand over Hong Kong in 1997. The Sino-British Joint Declaration was Thatcher's chief political issue with China when she was in power. Thatcher's relationship with China therefore was a key feature of her terms of office and her actions in Hong Kong made her more visible within a Chinese political context.

#### 3.4. Why Release and Subtitle *The Iron Lady* in China

Despite Thatcher's increased visibility in a Chinese context, *The Iron Lady* remains an unusual choice for the Chinese authorities to release and subtitle. It is a strange choice for the Chinese market/government to subtitle a film on Margaret Thatcher because British-Chinese relations have, as my discussion on Hong Kong suggested, often been strained. Moreover, while Thatcher's involvement in negotiations over Hong Kong made her more visible than most British Prime Ministers in China, she was still a comparatively unknown political figure in China at large. Furthermore, China's tradition of female leaders is not a strong one. In addition, the political systems of China and Great Britain might easily be seen as antithetical. China is a Communist country, an ideology traditionally associated with left-wing philosophies and principles. As a one-party-state organisation, the PRC operates a high degree of control over people's lives, public services and investments, and infrastructures (Kolenda 1990, p. 202). Power is highly centralised and state control strong (Edin 2005, pp. 1-2). This regime has been in existence in slightly varying forms since the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949 (Lü 2000, p. 4). In ideological and political terms, Thatcher's regime and beliefs contrast starkly with the Chinese regime of her era. In contrast to China's single party state, the British system has a multiplicity of very different parties which are democratically elected (Beloff and Peele 1985, p. 146). Her particular brand of Conservatism favoured a free market approach to public service and involved the sale of publically owned industry and utilities (Hall and Jacques 1983, p. 3).

Her government pursued a program of economic liberalism which runs counter to Chinese economic models.

However, while there are many reasons why *The Iron Lady* represents an unusual choice for the Chinese authorities to release and subtitle, there are interesting points of convergence between the film and Chinese culture. Aspects of Thatcher's style of rule might be argued to resonate in a Chinese context. A politician who carefully constructed and defended her power base, Thatcher, was a comparatively authoritarian figure in British history, albeit one functioning in a democratic system. She moved decisively to crush opposition to her policies by attacking the power of Trade Unions. *The Iron Lady* film depicted an authoritative figure who might echo aspects of Chinese values, was comprehensively portrayed as a leader and a woman who was a "passionate patriot, an instinctive economist, a lifelong student and a highly practical politician" (O'Sullivan 2013, p. 10). She built up a powerful political identity and at the same time crushed opposition as well. Moreover, the release of *The Iron Lady* in subtitled form might be seen to tap into a nascent trend for female political leaders in China. Keith Richburg (2012) points out that women are officially equal but politically underrepresented in China. According to the statistics from the party's Organisation Department, merely eleven percent of officials are female at the minister level or above (Richburg 2012). Such figures appear to confirm Geert Hofstede's (1984, p. 209) affirmation that men command in Chinese society. However, as the first female Prime Minister in Britain, Margaret Thatcher's tough leadership challenged gender stereotypes and assumptions. She might usefully therefore be seen as a precursor to the China's "Iron Lady", Wu Yi, who headed the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation from 1991 to 1998 and was promoted to Vice Premier in 2003 (Hsiung 1995, p. 582). She is renowned for her bold and decisive leadership, for example, when she negotiated Sino-Japanese relationship. Her visit to Japan in 2005 represented a key milestone in the improvement of relations between these two countries (Wan 2006, p. 17).

Moreover, however strained the relationship between China and the UK got in relation to the handover of Hong Kong, strong ties continued to bind the two nations. As David Crane (1981, p. 227) points out, trade was the foundation for links between China and Britain from the time of the Opium Wars. Moreover, cultural and artistic exchanges in the Sino-

British relationship developed from 1978 (Meissner 2002, p. 186). As part of this reform, China strengthened its relationship with the outside world (Zhenggang 2008). During the opening-up period, Chinese people were given more opportunities to have a closer experience of foreign cultures, especially via films which are a relatively convenient and simple way for the public to know more about the outside world. Links between the two countries were forged by agreements such as the Educational and Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed by both nations in London in 1979, along with scientific exchange programs held every two years. Though from 1972 to 1979, only ten joint projects were completed between China and Britain, the amount increased to 72 in 1986. The projects included film weeks, retrospective film exhibitions, collaborations in the areas of drama, fine art, publication, photography, education, library science and gardening (Meissner 2002, p. 186). The cooperation set a solid foundation for building up Sino-British diplomacy. Britain and China moreover were able to overcome in part the sticking block that Hong Kong represented in their relationship as China adopted a “一国两制” / “One Country, Two Systems” policy which recognised the capitalist system in Hong Kong and Macao as different from mainland China’s Communism. The relations between Britain and China have been maintained therefore in comparative closeness since 1979 (O’Sullivan 2013, p. 10).

Therefore, while there are stark reasons which make the release of *The Iron Lady* in China an unexpected choice (the starkly different political systems and the sensitive debate over Hong Kong), the Chinese authorities’ decision to release this film is comprehensible in key ways. *The Iron Lady* offers a vision of a leader cultivating a strong power base and crushing opposition. It taps into China’s small but growing trend for female leaders. Moreover, it can be read as part and parcel of China’s opening up policy as it allows a glimpse of a foreign world which nonetheless resonates in part with Chinese domestic politics. The subtitled film therefore is a product shaped by both the British politics of Thatcher and the politics of its targeted Chinese culture.

### 3.5. Reception of the Film in China

In some ways, the film’s reception in China bears out some of the arguments made above in relation to the Chinese government’s decision to release the film. The film was chosen



for release in China on International Women's Day on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2012. Intentionally or unintentionally, this film thus appeared on a day in celebration of women (Xinhuanet.com 2013). The selection of this film for Chinese release is, this chapter has suggested, an unusual one given the divergent political systems of China and the UK. *The Iron Lady* was not as successful as blockbusters like *Transformers* (2007), *Avatar* (2009), and *Titanic 3D* (2012), etc. in the Chinese market. At the box office, *The Iron Lady* merely earned 4 million RMB, far less than *The Hobbit* (2012) and *Upside Down* (2012) which earned 0.29 billion RMB and 42 million RMB respectively. The main reason for this low revenue is that *The Iron Lady* was a comparatively low-cost political film (Lu 2013). The critic Lei Sun suggests that the film was not commercially successful for two reasons: Firstly, the audiences in the cinema were mainly youngsters who were inclined to watch thrilling action films and were influenced by Hollywood films. Consequently, they lacked the patience for the low-cost art films. Secondly, there was also a regional disparity in viewing figures between big cities like Beijing and Shanghai and more rural areas (Lu 2013). The chief executive Haifang Fu from the Xingguang Theatre Chain in Zhejiang underlines that low-cost films with a focus on content without vivid visual effects may not meet the Chinese audiences' preference for commercial films (Lu 2013).

This biographical film summarises Thatcher's political career and records her life from girlhood to premiership which makes it a political film in this sense. The film is constructed around key political events such as the Miners' Strike, the Falklands War, and Thatcher's dance with Ronald Reagan, etc. Specific reviews described *The Iron Lady* as a strangely de-politicised portrait of Britain's first female Prime Minister by over-focusing on her mental health problems in late life (Rotten Tomatoes 2012). However, *The Iron Lady* was perhaps not as successful at the box office in Britain as some of its big budget, special-effect competitors, as it is still clearly a low-cost political film. The fact remains that the film is built around key historic events in a British political context. The subtitles thus have to translate for a contemporary Chinese audience both the language of the source film and its politics.

Interestingly, from the outset, the subtitled version of *The Iron Lady* was clearly intended to talk to and resonate with contemporary Chinese culture and politics. This film about a powerful woman, The Iron Lady, plays upon Thatcher's strength and breaking boundaries.

Thatcher's nickname, The Iron Lady was given by a Soviet journalist, Captain Yuri Gavrillov in 1976 in the newspaper *Red Star* because of her opposition to the Soviet Union and socialism (Thatcher 1976). Paradoxically, this critical nickname from a Communist state was redeployed by another communist state, China, in a more positive context, as we will see in the case analysis.

### 3.6. Theoretical Framework

Having elaborated on the film *The Iron Lady* (2011) in both the British and Chinese contexts, this section will subsequently draw on key theoretical elements to explore the key argument – how the subtitling transfers the politics of Margaret Thatcher for Chinese audiences whilst taking account of Chinese politics as a subtext. There is a clear political divide between Thatcher's Conservative Britain and contemporary Communist China. According to the eighteenth-century translation theorist Friedrich Schleiermacher (Lianeri 2002, p. 5), there is always a cultural and linguistic gap between the source text and the target culture for which one translates. It is, he argues, the job of the translator to bridge this gap. The cultural and linguistic gap between *The Iron Lady* and contemporary Chinese culture is broad. Using the analysis of British and Chinese political rhetorical structures offered by the works of Jonathan Charteris-Black (2005) and Meifang Zhang (2016), this chapter will now underline the breadth of this political gap in linguistic and cultural terms before considering how the subtitles bridge it.

Jonathan Charteris-Black in his book *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*, suggests that there are common rhetorical tropes or features to Margaret Thatcher's speeches (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 169). He underlines that conflict is a key feature or image or metaphor underlying Margaret Thatcher's speeches (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 169). Among the conflicts which feature in Thatcher's speeches are metaphors. These metaphors can be classified into groups based on the targets of Margaret Thatcher's imagined enemies: "the political opposition of the Labour Party; the social and economic problems of inflation, unemployment and crime and specific groups in society such as trade unions and the police. Finally, come a range of abstractions including private enterprise, Western civilisation, socialism, freedom, terrorism, markets, heritage, etc." (Charteris-Black 2005, pp. 169-170). The film echoes these conflict metaphors throughout

and the subtitlers have to choose what to do with these recurrent tropes of conflicts. As their source film is clearly a work on British political history, the subtitles cannot entirely domesticate the political; neither can they foreignise them entirely, for the cultural and political gap between source and target culture is too great. The challenges the subtitlers thus face are large. Charteris-Black (2005, pp. 181-182) also underlines that Thatcher's discourse relies heavily on strategies of parallelism and contrast. This chapter will therefore also examine how Thatcher's conflict metaphors are conveyed in Chinese and whether her rhetorical strategies of parallelism and contrast work in the Chinese context.

In order to make clear the profound cultural and political gap which the subtitles have to bridge, this chapter will also work with the compelling analysis of Meifang Zhang (2016) as she contemplates the core rhetorical strategies of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Charteris-Black and Meifang Zhang make for compelling reading when read in association as they underline that there are innate rhetorical structures in British and Chinese speeches by these political leaders, structures which are perhaps reflective of their political contexts. Meifang Zhang (2016, p. 18) argues that Chinese President Xi Jinping's choice of metaphor is essential to his persuasiveness, and she classifies his metaphors into two types: correlational metaphors and intertextual metaphors. Correlational metaphors "project the feature of our physical experience onto abstract domains by means of image schemata" (Zhang 2016, p. 19) while intertextual metaphors are metaphors which "emerge from the speaker's ability to contextually adapt, mentally represent, and linguistically convey the essence of the cultural and social aspects of experience" (Zhang 2016, p. 21). This chapter will apply Zhang's former type of metaphor, "correlation metaphors", that are closely associated with Thatcher's political stance, to the case analysis. Moreover, in order to make President Xi's speech impressive, other linguistic means are also employed, including parallelism, repetition and contrast (Zhang 2016, p. 8). Intriguingly, both Charteris-Black and Zhang's linguistic analyses of their respective leaders underline parallelism and contrast as key rhetorical structures in their discourse. This suggests that there may be common structures which link source culture and target culture despite the very different political systems. Translation theorist André Lefevere (2002, p. 10) argues that translation in whatever form is always a politically-loaded act, driven by the politics of a culture. This chapter will therefore consider not only the ways

in which the target culture politics shape the subtitling process, it will also evaluate the ways in which the political ideas of the source text and Margaret Thatcher's rhetorical structures are conveyed in Chinese. The chapter will focus on three key research questions:

- (1) How does *The Iron Lady* cast light on the specificities of subtitling political discourse?
- (2) How do the subtitles translate the rhetoric and policies of Margaret Thatcher in a context of Chinese politics in this case study of *The Iron Lady*?
- (3) How do political, historical, and cultural factors influence the translation of *The Iron Lady* for a Chinese audience?

### 3.7. Case Analysis

Jonathan Charteris-Black suggests that in Margaret Thatcher's speeches during the period of 1977 to 1987<sup>47</sup>, the metaphors of conflict dominate. He argues that there is "a cumulative effect of figures of speech in which different metaphor targets are all explained with reference to the domain of conflict" for the political audience (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 176). By using the conceptual frame of conflict to describe all types of enemies including "social and economic problems, trade unions, political opponents or actual ideologies such as socialism", Margaret Thatcher evokes negative associations in her evaluation of these opponents (Charteris-Black 2005, pp. 176-177). The conflict metaphor, therefore, encourages a transfer of evaluations in the political discourse of Margaret Thatcher. The Chinese subtitles are able directly to transfer these conflict metaphors using rhetorical strategies such as parallelism and contrast to enable the linguistic and ideological transfer. Since relatively little has been written on subtitling political discourse between Britain and China from the perspective of different rhetorical strategies, this chapter will use Charteris-Black's conflict metaphors as an initial point of analysis by means of which to approach the Chinese subtitles of *The Iron Lady*, in particular Thatcher's speeches. It will also use Zhang's structural analysis of the rhetorical construction of Chinese President Xi Jinping in order to assess whether there are rhetorical

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<sup>47</sup> Charteris-Black argues that the reason for the choice of this decade is because this was when Thatcher's rhetoric was at its most persuasive in terms of political success (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 168).

overlaps and symmetries between the political speeches of these two key leaders from Britain and China. Drawing on Charteris-Black's conflict metaphor and Charteris-Black and Zhang's rhetorical analysis of parallelism and contrast, this chapter will structure itself around seven distinct areas. It will analyse how the subtitles translate Thatcher's use of metaphors of household management, metaphors relating to her role as a female leader, metaphors of terrorism, metaphors relating to trade unions, bodily metaphors, metaphors applied to Thatcher's political opponents and finally parallel structures used in description of ideological heritage.

However, as the subtitles of *The Iron Lady* make clear, there are linguistic and ideological considerations which are not encompassed by Charteris-Black and Zhang's rhetorical approaches. This chapter will consequently adopt theories on politics from André Lefevere (2002, p. 8) that translators operate under the constraints of the cultures in which they work. Translators have the freedom to challenge the discourses featured by these constraints, but they may also be hemmed in by them (Lefevere 2002, p. 9). Translation manipulates texts in the service of power and politics. It may either impair or reinforce the prevailing ideologies (Lefevere 2002, p. 10). This chapter therefore reflects varied ideologies in Chinese and British politics behind the lines and on the subtitles. It will stress that the analysis of politics in the subtitles of *The Iron Lady* is multifaceted. The film is clearly a political film and its politics must be mediated by the subtitles. Therefore, following Lefevere's theories, the subtitles themselves are influenced and shaped by their contemporary Chinese political context.

### 3.7.1. Metaphors of Household Management

Interestingly, as Charteris-Black (2005, pp. 191-192) points out, metaphors of household management are frequent in Thatcher's political discourse. Capitalising on her position as a woman, Thatcher's discourse makes a virtue of female control of family finance (Charteris-Black 2005, pp. 191-192). The Chinese subtitles echo these metaphors of household management, using them as Thatcher does to align the financial decisions of government with those made by wives and mothers in the home. The subtitles on this area of metaphor underline the clear cultural equivalence which is possible in this area.

**Example 1: Good Housekeeping**

(1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher argues with another politician in relation to the importance of household management and compares this with financial decisions of government.*

(2) *Line:*

*MARGARET: I know much more than those who have never lived on a limited income. Just like the man or woman on the street, when I am short one week... I have to make economies the next.*

*POLITICIAN: Nothing like a slice of fiscal responsibility.*

*THATCHER: A man might call it fiscal responsibility. A woman might call it good housekeeping.*

(3) *Translation: 相对于从不知收入拮据意味的人 我更了解那样的生活*

*正如街上的男男女女 如果某一周 我手头拮据*

*那意味着下一周节衣缩食*

*-这和财政削减还扯不上关系*

*-对男人而已 可能是财政紧缩 对女人而已 就是持家有道*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: Compared to people who have never lived on a limited income I know more about that life*

*Just like men and women on the street if one random week I am hard up for money (to have no physical money in one's physical hand)*

*That means next week I economise in food and clothes*

*POLITICIAN: This does nothing with financial reduction*

*THATCHER: For men perhaps mean financial reduction*

*For women definitely mean managing family affairs methodically*

The original film's dialogue takes a clear and gendered approach to language and policy. Thatcher uses everyday approachable language to describe her chosen economic approach. She talks about being "short" and needing "to make economies". Her speech aligns her with everyday working-class people. The male politician's speech is of a different, more elevated and abstract level. He talks of "fiscal responsibility". The Chinese

subtitles maintain this gendered linguistic difference. The Chinese subtitles to Thatcher's speech are highly corporeal/ they refer to women being “手头拮据”/ “to be hard up for money” (to have no physical money in one's physical hand) (*C-E Dictionary*). In this way, they reflect Zhang's (2016, p. 19) suggestion that physical “correlational metaphors” are frequent in the Chinese political discourse of President Xi Jinping and the context in which he works. And in fact, they personalise and make Thatcher's speech even more physical. While Thatcher talks of “making economies”, the Chinese subtitles detail the nature of those economies, “节衣缩食”/ “to economise in food and clothes” (*C-E Dictionary*). Again the contrast between the subtitled female speech and the male character is clear. The Chinese subtitles echo the abstract approach of the male politician, translating “fiscal responsibility” as “财政削减”/ “financial reduction”. Interestingly though, the Chinese subtitles elevate Thatcher's speech, marking it as more formal in style than the male politician as Thatcher's speech in Chinese contains three different four-character idiom phrases as highlighted in the above texts. These phrases stand out both structurally and rhetorically and mark Thatcher as a politician with key and catchy tropes. As Thatcher's speech focuses on a metaphor of domestic economy, the film shows her father, a grocer, discussing the economy of small businesses.

Example 2: A Nation of Shopkeepers

(1) *Description of Scene: Margaret's father is the Mayor of Grantham and a grocer. He is giving a speech to encourage people to stand on their own feet.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET'S FATHER: We on this island are strong, we're self-reliant.*

*Napoleon called us a nation of shopkeepers.*

*He meant it as an insult but to me it's a compliment.*

*That's why he couldn't beat us, and that's why Hitler can't beat us.*

(3) *Translation: 我们生于此岛 强韧而自恃*

*拿破仑把我们称作店小二民族*

*就其目的 不乏侮辱意味 但在我看来 却是一种赞美*

*这是他战胜不了我们的原因 更是希特勒无法攻克我们的原因*

(4) *Back Translation:*

MARGARET'S FATHER: *We were born on this island strong and self-reliant*  
*Napolun calls us shop waiter (Dian Xiao Er) nation*  
*For its purpose not lack of insulting meaning*  
*But from my point of view yet is a compliment*  
*This is the reason he cannot beat us even is the reason*  
*Xitele cannot conquer us*

Britain was negatively regarded as “a nation of shopkeepers” by Napoleon. First used in an offensive sense by the French revolutionary Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac in 1794 in a speech to the National Convention (Adams 1795, p. 312), later during the Napoleonic period the British press quoted this phrase from either the French or Napoleon himself (MacFarlane 1984, p. 440). While the British original dialogue describes Napoleon’s insult, the Chinese subtitles amplify it. The British word, “shopkeeper” who “carries on business in a shop” (OED), is neutral and descriptive. It describes merely a profession. However, it is rendered in the Chinese subtitles with the much more negative Chinese characters, “店小二民族”/ “shop waiter (Dian Xiao Er) nation”. “Dian Xiao Er” is an old-fashioned way of calling a servant in a restaurant and/or a lodge in Chinese (C-E Dictionary). The Chinese characters here are colloquial and offer a value judgement on the profession in a way which is not present in the English term *shopkeeper*. The insult is thus stronger in the Chinese subtitles because of the downgraded identity from an owner of a shop to a subordinate as “Dian Xiao Er” relates to the waiter/waitress and is under supervision of the shopkeeper.

To summarise, while there are common themes to the subtitles’ translation of these metaphors of home and business management, so too are there differences in relation to Thatcher’s speech on good housekeeping. The subtitles maintain the difference between female bodily language and male abstract economies, but they amplify and mark Thatcher’s speech as catchy politics via the use of the four-character Chinese idioms. Likewise in relation to the speech of Thatcher’s father, the choice of vocabulary amplifies the insult.



### 3.7.2. Metaphors of Female Leadership

According to Charteris-Black (2005, p. 191), the first female Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, was particularly keen to exploit any opportunity to stress the central role women could play. Images and metaphors of feminine strength are thus abundant. In *The Iron Lady*, the heroine, a strong and decisive female leader, clearly taps into this category. This section will consider both the nature of these images of female power and how they are translated into a Chinese context.

#### Example 3: Chambermaid

(1) *Description of Scene: The Leader of the Conservatives, Margaret Thatcher, is persuaded to run for the post of Prime Minister by her two spokesmen.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: It's all very well to talk about changing my voice, Mr. Reece, but for some of my colleagues to imagine me as their leader...*

*would be like imagining, I don't know,  
being led into battle by their chambermaid.*

*It's my background, and my sex.*

*No matter how hard I've tried,*

*and I have tried to fit in, I will never be truly one of them.*

(3) *Translation: 对于我嗓音改变的提议 确实很好 但瑞斯先生*

*对我的同僚而言 要将我视为领袖...*

*就好比是 怎么说呢*

*让家庭主妇带领着去战斗*

*我的背景还有性别*

*无论我如何努力 我也确实努力了*

*努力去融入 但请相信 我永远无法真正成为其中一员*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: As for the suggestion of changing my voice indeed very good but Sir Ruisi*

*For my colleague imaging me as leader...*

*It is like how to say*

*Leading by housewife to battle*

*my background and gender*

*no matter how hard I try I do try hard  
trying hard to fit in but please believe I have never truly become one of  
them*

The Chinese subtitles' choice in relation to their translation of the metaphor of this discussion on female leadership is revealing in relation to the question of linguistic equivalence. In the English dialogue, the heroine shows her awareness that some of her fellow party members think of her becoming the party leader running for Prime Minister is like a *chambermaid* (a general) leading an army (the Conservative Party) to battle (the election campaign). Her imagery serves to underline her disbelief in the possibility of her holding such a role. However, *chambermaid* in English is quite a specific word with a specific socio-economic context. In the modern world, it refers to a paid housemaid or menial worker in a hotel (*OED*). It is a word which relates to a low-paid job whose holder is unlikely to access the upper echelons of political power. The Chinese subtitles, however, lessen the stark contrast between *chambermaid* and leader as they choose to render *chambermaid* simply as “家庭主妇” (“housewife”). While Chinese does have a word for someone who cleans hotel rooms for guests, “清洁工” (“cleaner”), the word is gender neutral and therefore cannot make the original's specific point in relation to female power and possibility. Therefore, while the subtitles maintain the gender discourse of the source texts, they are unable to match its specific imagery.

**Example 4: Trump Card**

(1) *Description of Scene: Two spokesmen are persuading Margaret Thatcher to run for the election of Prime Minister. They claim that her gender would serve to her advantage.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: It's my background, and my sex.*

*No matter how hard I've tried,  
and I have tried to fit in, I will never be truly one of them.*

*MR. REECE: If I may say so, I think that's your trump card.*

*You're flying in the face of everything the Tories have been thus far.  
It's really very exciting.*

*One simply has to maximise your appeal... bring out all your qualities...  
and make you look and sound, like the leader that you could be.*

*You've got it in you to go the whole distance.*

(3) *Translation:* 我的背景还有性别

无论我如何努力 我也确实努力了

努力去融入 但请相信 我永远无法真正成为其中一员

-请容我插一句 不妨将其视为你的王牌

迄今为止 你都公然违抗 保守党的政见和决断

这些都非常鼓舞人心

稍作简单改变 就能最大化你的魅力...

带出你的品质...

让你的外貌和嗓音 更像你希冀成为的领袖

而这些必须 且只能仰赖你自己去完成

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: My background and gender*

*No matter how hard I try I do try hard*

*Trying hard to fit in but please believe I have never truly become one of them*

*MR. REECE:*

*Please allow me to insert one sentence why don't you use it as your trump card*

*By so far you always publicly disobey Conservative party's political views and decisions*

*These are all very inspiring*

*Making slightly simple change definitely can maximise your charm*

*Bringing along your quality*

*Making your appearance and voice being alike the leader you wishfully want to become*

*But these must and only can rely on yourself to complete*

This current subtitle progressively maintains the metaphor of female leadership. What it underlines is that the translation of the source text *trump card* is linguistically possible in Chinese “王牌”/“trump card”. Another use of language in this example relates to “Tories”. “Tory”, as the *OED* (1989) defines it, “is the member or the supporter of the Conservative Party”. It refers to “the oldest of the political parties of modern Britain” (Beloff and Peele 1985, p. 147). “Tory” is a specifically British word, rooted deeply in British history. It stems from the English political party who opposes the exclusion of James II from succession in

the seventeenth century. While its general meaning as a symbol of Conservative values is transferrable, its cultural specificity and geographical associations are not. It does not have an equivalent in the Chinese political system since China has only one party which is the Communist Party. The Chinese subtitles are able to translate the metaphor of gender as a politically powerful and innovative tool in election campaign. When considering the film's translation of metaphors of female power, an assessment of the film's title itself is necessary. The term "The Iron Lady", not only serves as the film's title, it is also a feature of the film's dialogue.

**Example 5: The Iron Lady**

(1) *Description of Scene: The press briefly summarises Thatcher's political career on television.*

(2) *Line:*

*NARATOR: Baroness Thatcher made an apparently routine visit to her doctor today.*

*Although rarely seen in public,  
Britain's longest serving Prime Minister of the twentieth century,  
remains a controversial figure.*

*Almost lovingly dubbed by the Soviets The Iron Lady,  
she's credited, with her friend Ronald Reagan,  
with a decisive role in the ending of the Cold War.*

*Her supporters claim she transformed the British economy  
and reversed the country's post-war decline.*

*Her detractors blame her savage public spending  
cuts and sweeping privatisation of...*

(3) *Translation: 撒切尔男爵夫人今天依惯例拜访了他的医生*

*尽管长期淡出公众视线*

*这位 20 世纪任期最长的首相*

*仍是个颇具争议的人物*

*被苏维埃政府昵称为铁娘子*

*她及其好友罗纳德·里根（美国第 40 任总统）*

在冷战末期起了决定性的作用  
她的拥护者称其改变英国的经济...  
更彻底逆转了战后的衰退  
反对者则指责其滥用公共资源...  
大力削减及荡除私有化...

(4) *Back Translation:*

*NARATOR: Male Knight, Madam Saqie'er today visited his (sic) doctor as usual  
Although for a long time she fades out public sight  
This twentieth-century Prime Minster serves the longest office term  
Yet is a rather controversial figure  
Being nicknamed as Iron Wife by Soviet government  
She and her good friend, Luonade Ligen (the fortieth American President)  
Play a decisive role at the end of the Cold War  
Her supporters claim that she changed British economy...  
Even thoroughly reversed post-war recession  
Opposers however accuse her of overusing public resources...  
And sharply cut and shake off privatisation...*

*The Iron Lady*, the nickname of the first female Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, has enshrined her in a specific ideology. She is renowned for her combative character which is closely bound up with her personality. Her nickname *The Iron Lady* is a result of a symbol of “Western resistance to the Soviet Union” (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 165). Her Soviet detractors originally chose *iron* as a metaphor with obviously pejorative intentions presumably because the personality of hardness and inflexibility is often associated with male rather than female leaders (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 166). Later, this metaphorical phrase came to be reinterpreted as a mark of respect instead of criticism as this use of a metaphor gradually became a powerful weapon in establishing her identity as a woman in a male-dominated political world (Charteris-Black 2005, pp. 165-166). The English word *lady* is simply a polite or formal way of referring to a woman. While it may also because of its historical meanings imply that the woman in question is of good social position, it offers no clue as to her marital status. The Chinese subtitles maintain the *Iron* reference but render *Lady* as “娘子” (“wife”). They choose the more formal and archaic

word for wife. Significantly, they have to, for linguistic reasons, place Thatcher's status as a wife in the foregrounding of the title and specific dialogues within the film. The term “铁娘子” (“Iron Wife”) has clear cultural and historical currency and is, therefore, an entirely appropriate translation choice as it was what Thatcher was called favourably in China during her life time. The term still circulates in China but is now applied to the new British female Prime Minister, Theresa May, a figure who is known in China as “新铁娘子” (“new Iron Wife”). The subtitles in this instance are thus culturally and historically specific even if they need to be more specific in marital terms than the source text.

**Example 6: Conceptual Battle**

(1) *Description of Scene: The discussion between Thatcher and the US Secretary of State in relation to the Falklands War shows Thatcher's determination to maintain the sovereignty of the United Kingdom and her lands.*

(2) *Line:*

*OFFICIAL: The US Secretary of State has arrived, Prime Minister.*

*GENERAL HAIG: So you are proposing to go to war over these islands.*

*They're thousands of miles away,  
a handful of citizens, politically and economically insignificant, if you'll  
excuse me.*

*MARGARET: Just like Hawaii, I imagine.*

*GENERAL HAIG: I'm sorry?*

*MARGARET: 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour.*

*Did America go cap in hand...  
and ask Tojo for a peaceful negotiation of terms?  
Did she turn her back on her own citizens there...  
because the islands were thousands of miles from mainland United  
States?  
No, no, no!  
We will stand on principle or we shall not stand at all.*

*GENERAL HAIG: But Thatcher with all due respect when one has been to war...*

*MARGARET: With all due respect Sir... I have done battle every single day of my life...*

*and many men have underestimated me before. This lot seems bound to do the same...*

*but they will rue the day.*

(3) Translation: 美国国务卿已经到了 首相

-你的计划就是开战

这不过是几千里之外的弹丸之地 民众数量寥寥无几

在政治经济上的影响都微乎其微 请原谅我不甚恰当的说法

-我想是否 正如夏威夷一般呢

-抱歉?

-1941年, 日本偷袭珍珠港

美国政府是否卑躬屈膝地

向东条英机请求签订和平协议呢?

美国是否仅仅因为 那是个几千里之外的弹丸之地...

而将其民众置之脑后

没有 从来没有

在原则问题上 我们必须坚持 不然则将无立足之地

-玛格丽特 请恕我冒昧 一旦两国开战

-也请恕我冒犯 先生...

我这一生每天都在斗争...

很多男人都曾低估了我

这次 这些家伙也似乎如此...

但总有一天 他们会后悔

(4) Back Translation:

OFFICIAL: American National Affair Secretary has already arrived Prime Minister

GENERAL HAIG: Your plan is definitely going to war.

*This is only a pellet-like land that is several thousands of miles away with just a very few people.*

*Political and economic influences are insignificant please forgive my inappropriate words.*

MARGARET: I think if this is exactly like Hawaii?

GENERAL HAIG: *Sorry?*

MARGARET: *In 1941, Japan secretly attacked the Pearl Harbour.*

*Does American government bow low and sweep the ground with it's cap  
begging for Dongtiaoyingji to sign peaceful agreement?*

*Does America put its people behind*

*Just because that is a pellet-like land that is several thousands of miles away?*

*Never never ever*

*On principle issue we must insist otherwise we will have no place to put  
our feet*

GENERAL HAIG: *Magelite please forgive my bold attempt once two countries go to war*

MARGARET: *Also please forgive my bold attempt Sir...*

*I have been doing battle every single day of my life ...*

*Many men have ever underestimated me.*

*This time these guys seem the same...*

*But there will be a day they will regret*

The source film dialogue intriguingly weaves gender into Thatcher's political discussions with this American politician. The American politician queries Thatcher's judgement about going to war over a small group of islands. Thatcher, to justify her decision, invokes the example of the United States and Hawaii, another group of small islands. Thatcher genders the United States as female. The general trend for America using "it" referring to countries is more common than a gender specific pronoun "she". Therefore, it might be assumed that the repetitive use of a gender specific pronoun "she" in this case may invoke gender argument (Fingers 2014). Thatcher says: "Did America go cap in hand (...) Did she turn her back on her own citizens there". The English dialogue uses three gender word "she", "her" and "her". Thatcher is aligning herself with the power and victory of the United States in World War II as she prepares to go to war over the Falklands. While it is possible in Chinese to gender China as female, as a "母国" ("motherland"), the subtitles do not gender the United States as female. They convey all of the conflict metaphors of this section of source dialogue, but they do not do so in a gender context. Unlike the previous example ("铁娘子"/ "the Iron Wife") where the subtitles specify an extra layer



of gender information that the source does not have, here the subtitles cut a gender approach to conflict which Thatcher invokes to justify her action.

To sum up, the subtitles regarding the metaphors of female leadership indicate the range of linguistic, cultural and ideological transfer that the subtitles employ when translating. Significantly, when translating Margaret Thatcher's political identity via the *The Iron Lady* epithet, the subtitles have to make alterations, recasting the fairly neutral English word lady into a more specific Chinese word “娘子”/ “wife”. They match the respectful tone of the original but add marital information.

### 3.7.3. Metaphors of Terrorism and War

As the battle against terrorism loomed large in Thatcher's era, it is unsurprising that terrorism is a key image in her political speeches. Reference is made to metaphors of terrorism and war – closely associated with terror attacks drawn from the film *The Iron Lady*. Terrorist enemies targeted in speeches within the film include the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Argentinian forces threatening the Falklands. It is crucial to note that when talking about IRA terrorism and the Falklands war, these are not themselves metaphors but the way in which they are depicted are metaphorical. While the IRA was perhaps more conventionally categorised by some as terrorists, the application of terrorist vocabulary to the nation of Argentina serves more visibly as a politically motivated attempt to bolster support for the Falklands War.

#### Example 7: Conceptual Evil

(1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher is talking about the explosion that extensively damaged the Grand Hotel in Brighton, scene of the Conservative Party conference. The Irish Republican Army has claimed responsibility for this explosion.*

(2) *Line:*

*MARGARET: We have always lived along with evil.*

*But it has never been so patient,*

*so avid for carnage, so eager to carry innocents along with it into oblivion.*

*Western civilisation must root out this evil, wherever it hides,*

*or she risks defeat at the hands of global terror in a nuclear age.*

(3) Translation: 恶魔始终相伴而行

但却从未如此次一般 毫无耐性

渴求流血 并将无辜生命拖入深渊

西方文明必须将这恶魔根除 无论它藏身何处

否则在这个核时代 她将可能打响全球反恐战争

(4) Back Translation:

MARGARET: Demon always accompanies us on the walk.

But never like this completely lack of patience

Eager for bleeding blood and drag innocent life into abyss

Western civilisation must eradicate this demon no matter where it hides

Otherwise at this nuclear age she will perhaps start global anti-terrorism war

The source dialogue in this example is clearly a political speech with powerful rhetoric. Thatcher's dialogue builds itself around a recurrent "so", establishing power through its repetition. Evil is given human characteristics and personified with human capacities. It is, according to Thatcher's speech, "patient, avid and eager". English, however, denies it a personal identity as Thatcher refers to evil using the term "it". In stark contrast, "Western civilisation", the force battling this abstract evil with human characteristics, is personified in the film dialogue in a feminine incarnation which echoes the actions of Thatcher herself. Thatcher claims: "Western civilisation must root out this evil, wherever it hides, or she risks defeat at the hands of global terror in a nuclear age". The Chinese subtitles render evil as "恶魔" / "demon". While they do not replicate the English use of "it" that has recurrently appeared previously, by using "恶魔" / "demon" they straddle the boundary between the human and the non-human. Interestingly, in this gender focused film, the Chinese subtitles choose to maintain the gendering of Western civilisation: "她将可能打响全球反恐战争" ("she will perhaps start global anti-terrorism war"). The repetitive use of "it" does not echo in the Chinese. Rather, a more concrete word "恶魔" / "demon" is repeatedly kept in the Chinese subtitles which might reinforce a determination to eradicate terrorist in the Chinese context.

Example 8: Conceptual Gang

(1) *Description of Scene: The Falkland Islands, a British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic, have fallen. Argentina claims its marines went ashore as a spearhead this morning to capture key targets, including the capital, Port Stanley. Thatcher comments on this invasion.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: Gentlemen, the Argentinian Junta...*

*which is a fascist gang...*

*has invaded our sovereign territory. This cannot be tolerated.*

*May I make plain my negotiating position?*

*I will not negotiate with criminals or thugs.*

*The Falkland Islands belong to Britain, and I want them back.*

(3) *Translation: 先生们 阿根廷军阀...*

*就是一群法西斯暴徒...*

*对于我们统治区域的无耻侵犯 是绝不能姑息的*

*容我明确一下谈判的立场*

*我不会和任何暴徒及凶犯谈判*

*福克兰群岛隶属英国 我要求它回归英国*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: Gentlemen Agenting military clique...*

*definitely is a group of Faxisi ferocious disciple...*

*We absolutely cannot tolerate the shameless violation of our govern area.*

*Let me be clear about my position of negotiation.*

*I will never negotiate with any ferocious disciple and murderer.*

*Fukelan islands belong to Britain I demand its return to Britain*

The subtitle clearly underlines the linguistic, cultural and ideological challenges for the Chinese subtitles. First of all, the subtitles foreignise the initial part of “the Argentinian Junta” by transcribing the country’s possessive noun “Argentinian” phonetically as “阿根廷”/“Agenting”. “Junta”, defined as “a military or political group that rules a country after taking power by force” (OED), is rendered as a Chinese cultural equivalent “军阀”/“military clique”. However, in English *Junta*, although it is part of common usage in elevated register, it is still clearly a word of foreign origin (it originally referred to a Spanish or Portuguese council). The Chinese rendering of this word contains none of these foreign

overtones which serve Thatcher’s characterisation of the enemy as alien. Fascist gang underlines an intriguing use of foreignisation and linguistic equivalence in the Chinese subtitles. Fascist has been transliterated as “法西斯”/ “Faxisi” whilst gang, defined as “a group of young people involved in petty crime or violence” (OED), is translated as “暴徒”/ “ferocious disciple” in a more savagely fierce manner. The choice of words in Chinese reveals that the speaker strongly disagrees with the act of war in question. Another image relating to this war is the translation of the words “criminals or thugs”. While in English these mean “a person who has committed a crime” and “a violent person, especially a criminal” (OED) respectively, the Chinese subtitles amplify the negative connotations of these words by rendering “thug” as “凶犯”/ “murderer”. If the subtitles in this example lose the foreign attributes of the Argentinian Junta, they add to the violence of Thatcher’s criticism. The next example will focus on the terrorist metaphor in relation to conceptual right and wrong. Multiple linguistic and ideological overtones characterise this metaphor.

**Example 9: Conceptual Right and Wrong**

(1) *Description of Scene: Britain is celebrating the victory of the Falklands War and the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, is giving a speech on this.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: We were faced with an act of unprovoked aggression, and we responded as we have responded in time past: with unity, strength and courage, sure in the knowledge that though much is sacrificed, in the end, right will prevail over wrong.*

(3) *Translation: 我们被迫面对一场无端挑起的侵犯…*

*我们一如既往地做出响应  
团结一致 奋力抵抗 英勇对敌  
 尽管最终我们付出了大量牺牲  
但始终邪不胜正*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: We are forced to face an unprovoked invasion...*

*We as always as before make response  
Unite as one rise in resistance face the enemy valiantly*

*Although we finally make enormous sacrifice  
but from beginning to end evil can never prevail over good.*

In the rendering of this victory of the Falkland Wars that are metaphorically described as right in the source film's dialogue while its opposite side wrong refers to the Argentinian attack. The Chinese subtitles adopt four-character idioms to create the referential meaning. The "chengyu" in this section of dialogue mark Thatcher's speech as a rhetorical and aesthetic piece. In picking established Chinese idiom, the subtitles find an associated equivalent of the concepts expressed in the source dialogue, but they do not translate word for word. The subtitles translate the rhetorical gloss, the elevated register and the cultural power of the source dialogue in a translation which has to deviate from aspects of the source dialogue in order to do so. Cultural equivalence has been achieved by means of the idiomatic expression in translating "with unity, strength and courage" as "团结一致 奋力抵抗 英勇对敌"/ "unite as one rise in resistance face the enemy valiantly" (*C-E Dictionary*). There is also a creative translation gain in terms of creating syntactic parallelism in the subtitle. The innovative rhetorical strategy of parallelism is used to make this encouraging and powerful reference accessible for Chinese audiences, as Zhang (2016, p. 8) suggests in the Chinese political context. There is also an instance of an inversion of the metaphor where right is positively evaluated while wrong is negatively evaluated. The Chinese subtitles clearly render the metaphor as well as the contrast to which it is attached as "邪不胜正"/ "evil can never prevail over good" (*C-E Dictionary*) in a four-character idiomatic form when linguistic and ideological equivalence is achieved in the subtitling.

Charteris-Black's focus on terrorism, war and battle that are metaphorically portrayed force us to consider the subtitling of Thatcher's politics in *The Iron Lady* and Chinese politics as a subtext. Linguistic and ideological representation is achieved via the application of multiple rhetorical strategies, including metaphor, parallelism, and contrast in the Chinese subtitling.

#### 3.7.4. Metaphors Relating to Trade Unions

Charteris-Black (2005, p. 170) considers the place given to economic problems in relation to unemployment and inflation. Thatcher frequently conceptualised unemployment as an

enemy and as a conflict in which she was at battle (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 170). Thatcher's dialogue concerning the above issues allows her to justify her attempts to restrict the power of Trade Unions.

*Example 10: Trade Unions and the Economy*

(1) *Description of the Scene: Margaret Thatcher argues with her political opposition about the restriction of the Trade Unions in the Conservative conference.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: The Right Honourable gentleman knows very well*

*that we have no choice but to close the schools!*

*Because his union paymasters have called a strike deliberately to*  
*cripple our economy.*

*Teachers cannot teach when there is no heating, no lighting in their*  
*classrooms.*

(3) *Translation: 尊敬的各位议员 各位都深知 目前除了关闭学校*

*我们别无选择*

*因为工会主计官号召工人罢工 已逐步削弱我们的经济*

*在教师缺乏供暖供电的情况下 教师无法继续教学*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: Honourable representative as we all know*

*We have no choice nowadays but to close school*

*Because trade union chief accounting officer calls workers out on strike*  
*that have already weakened our economy*

*Teachers are unable to continue teaching when there is no heating and*  
*electricity*

This example offers an intriguing case study for the subtitler as it asks him/her to translate a cultural situation which does not exist in China. Thatcher is unhappy that schools have been closed by a wide-spread strike organised by the Trade Unions despite her opposition to it. While there are Trade Unions in China, strikes do not function in the same way. Unions are required to apply for permission to strike, permission may or may not be granted. Even if permission is granted, the strikes in question are controlled in terms of time and impact by the Chinese government. There is, thus, as the subtitles make clear, a

subtle cultural gap between source and target culture. This gap perhaps explains why the Chinese subtitles make changes to the source dialogue. In the English dialogue, Thatcher claims that the strike “cripples our economy”. She uses a lexicalised metaphor to denote the damage caused to the economy associated with a bodily imagery. In China, such strikes cannot cause the same damage and so the subtitles choose a far weaker word “削弱” (“gradually weaken”). In English, the Trade Unions’ strike prevents the economy from working, in Chinese it merely prevents it from working as effectively. Interestingly, Zhang (2016, p. 17) underlines that it is common to use bodily images in Chinese political discourse in order to transfer “from our concrete body experience to the abstract domain by means of image schemata”. Thus, the subtitles’ choice not to use a bodily image here is significant. A bodily image that would typically have been used here is “致残废” / “forced to disable” while the actual Chinese subtitles mediate this into a far milder expression. It is perhaps the function of strike differs in Britain and China, as previous states.

Example 11: Trade Unions Persecute Workers

(1) *Description of the Scene: Margaret Thatcher encourages people to get back to work after the strike led by the Trade Unions.*

(2) *Line:*

*MARGARET: The Trade Unions Movement was founded to protect workers.*

*Now it persecutes them. It stops them from working.*

*It is killing jobs and it is bringing this country to its knees.*

*I say enough.*

*It’s time to get up.*

*It’s time to go to work.*

*It’s time to put the Great back into Great Britain.*

(3) *Translation: 工会运动是为了保护工人*

*而现在却在行迫害之事 阻止工人去工作*

*这会破坏就业机会 更会让这个国家捉襟见肘*

*要我说 是时候结束了*

*是时候站起来 回到工作中去*

是时候 让曾经的日不落重现辉煌

(4) Back Translation:

MARGARET: Trade Unions movement was founded to protect workers

but now performing an act of persecuting

and preventing workers from working.

This can destroy working opportunity even can make this country expose

its elbow

Let me say it is time to stop

It is time to stand up and go back to work

It is time to let the sun once never sets reappear splendidly

Interestingly, bodily images and lexicalised metaphors are key also to this example. Thatcher accuses Trade Unions of “bringing this country to its knees”. She personifies Britain as a human who is suffering. The Chinese translation maintains a bodily image in order to underline the very real impact of economic difficulties on the individual. The subtitles though do not translate the bodily image of the original. Instead, they substitute it for a “chengyu”, a set phrase “捉襟见肘” / “to expose its elbow” (to have too many difficulties to cope with) (*C-E Dictionary*). While this Chinese “chengyu” has multiple meanings, it generally indicates a person in difficulty. However, there is an argument to be made that it again weakens the impact of the source dialogue. In English, a person on their knees cannot work, walk or function. In contrast, the Chinese “chengyu”, in one of its possible meanings<sup>48</sup>, serves as an indication that you still can work to overcome difficulty. Again, although the precise content of the English source is lost, the “chengyu” with its elevated rhetoric translates the impact of the original speech.

Setting out her alternative vision as opposed to that of the Trade Unions, Thatcher in her English source says, “It’s time to put the Great back into Great Britain”. While Chinese has different words to describe Thatcher’s country, (“英国”/ “United Kingdom”; “大不列颠帝国”/ “Great Britain” and “英格兰”/ “England”), the subtitles do not name Great Britain

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<sup>48</sup> The Chinese “chengyu”, “捉襟见肘” (“to expose its elbow”) has multiple meanings: “pulling out the front piece of clothes only to expose elbows; to describe the state in raggedness; to attend to one thing and lose sight of another and to struggle to cope with too many difficulties”. The above multiple meanings are available from *Online Chengyu Dictionary* [http://chengyu.teacher.cn.com/zhuo/cy\\_40102.html](http://chengyu.teacher.cn.com/zhuo/cy_40102.html).



in the closing line of the example. Instead, they make a cultural reference to the phrase “the Empire on which the sun will never set”, a phrase which in the Chinese context metaphorically represents Great Britain. This phrase is extensively used for the British Empire that at least one part of his territory is in daylight, mainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, the British Empire reached a territorial size larger than any other empire in the globe (Fordyce 1931, p. 152). The subtitles, thus, draw on the cultural knowledge of the Chinese audience as well as the imperial history of Britain and China. Furthermore, the Chinese subtitle, “日不落” / “the sun once never sets” denotes “greatness” in the same way as the original line of the source film. Therefore, Thatcher’s rhetorical use of “great” in her line can be replicated in the subtitle.

In summary, the Chinese subtitles in relation to the Trade Unions adopt different strategies when translating economic conflicts. Interestingly, in both examples, bodily language features, echoing Thatcher’s attempt to underline the physical impact of the economy and the trade Unions on British citizens and their bodies. With the exception of *to cripple* whose bodily image disappears and reshapes into a milder expression, the lexicalised metaphor of bringing this country to its knees is translated as a Chinese four-character idiom “捉襟见肘” / “to expose its elbow” (to have too many difficulties to cope with) (*C-E Dictionary*). Physical impact and human bodies transcend cultural and linguistic divides. They are, therefore, perhaps most readily translatable in the subtitling process.

### 3.7.5. Bodily Metaphors

Intriguingly, bodily or health metaphors are frequent in Margaret Thatcher’s speeches (Charteris-Black 2005, p. 180) in the film. She uses them in a political context, making reference to health and illness to justify both her policies and manifestos. She implicitly claims to offer health to a politically sick nation. It may be worth acknowledging that all “bodily metaphors” in Thatcher’s lines drawn from the film appear to be lexicalised.

#### Example 12: Medicine

- (1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher is making spending cuts in the middle of the deepest recession Britain has ever experienced.*
- (2) *Line:*

MARGARET: Gentlemen, if we don't cut spending we will be bankrupt.

Yes, the medicine is harsh...

but the patient requires it in order to live.

Should we withhold the medicine? No! We are not wrong.

We did not seek election and win in order to manage...

the decline of a great nation.

The people of this country chose us

because they believe we can restore the health of the British

economy

and we will do just that! Barring a failure of nerve.

(3) Translation: 先生们 若再不削减预算 我们就面临着破产

是的 良药确实苦口...

但重病患却需要借此维系生命

现在是要拒绝这剂猛药吗 不 我们并没有做错

我们参选来管理这个国家 并不是为了...

让这个伟大的国家倒退

民众选择了我们...

因为他们深信 我们能重建英国经济

这也是我们将要做的

而不是畏首畏脚

(4) Back Translation:

MARGARET: Gentlemen we are facing bankrupt if not cutting budget

Yes good medicine indeed tastes bitter...

But the patient who is seriously ill needs it to sustain his/her life

Now are we rejecting this dose of important medicine no we are not

doing incorrect

We are running election to manage this country not at all with the aim  
of...

making this great country decline

People chose us...

because they firmly believe that we can rebuild the British economy

*This is also what we will do  
rather than being frightened all over (head and limbs).*

Interestingly, there is clear translation crossover between the English language source and the Chinese subtitles. Chinese can and does translate the bodily metaphors of illness, remedy and health. The subtitles keep the medical imagery of economic remedies and medicine. So too do they emphasise the validity of Thatcher's actions as she positions herself as an individual chosen by the physical individuals who make up the British nation in order to safeguard the economy which feeds them. Intriguingly, if anything, the Chinese subtitles are more corporeal than the English source as "barring a failure of nerve" becomes "而不是畏首畏脚"/ "being frightened all over (head and limbs)". While the meaning of both phrases is broadly similar, underlining the need to overcome fear, the English phrase is cerebral. It underlines that Thatcher must keep her head resolute. Chinese, in a four-character idiom "畏首畏脚"/ "being frightened all over (head and limbs)" (*C-E Dictionary*), a set phrase, translates this need to be resolute in physical terms, articulating it in terms of head and limbs and their actions.

**Example 13: Life Blood**

(1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher's father is the Mayor of Grantham and a grocer, he is giving a speech to encourage people to stand on their own feet.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET'S FATHER: What is the life blood of any community?*

*It's business...*

*Not just big business but small business, like mine.*

*We on this island are strong. We're self-reliant.*

*Sometimes we're plain bloody minded.*

*But we also believe in helping each other.*

*And I don't mean by state hand-outs...*

(3) *Translation: 社区的生存命脉何在*

*就是商业...*

*不是那些所谓巨头 而是些小本生意 好比我*

*我们生于此岛 强韧而自恃*

*虽偶求中庸*

但仍坚信互助助人  
我并非指政府施舍...

(4) Back Translation:

MARGARET'S FATHER: Where is the surviving lifeblood of any community

*It definitely is business...*

*Not those so-called tycoons but these businesses with a small capital just like me*

*We were born on this island strong and self-reliant although sometimes seeking the golden mean*

*But we still believe in helping each other and this way helps us.*

*I do not refer to the offers from government...*

The example maintains a focus again on bodies and their function. At first glance, the Chinese subtitles appear less corporeal than their English source. They replace “life blood” with “生存命脉” / “surviving lifeline”. The Chinese expression takes out the bodily presence of its original. Likewise, the subtitles remove the bodily image in the next line, when translating the English idiom “bloody minded” into Chinese. “Bloody minded” in English relates to a stubborn unwillingness to deviate from one’s course (*OED*). It can also be used as a profanity. The Chinese subtitler completely passes over both this meaning and this profanity, rendering it as “求中庸” / “seeking the golden mean”. The Chinese subtitler chooses this expression presumably as a result of Confucianisms believe that “中庸” (“golden mean”) is a means to neutralise ethical, political and socioeconomic conflicts across Chinese history and finally to achieve an ideal state of unity and harmony (Zhou 2012, p. 95). Therefore, the Chinese subtitles are mediated via the cultural and ideological concerns of China.

**Example 14: Backbone of Our Nation**

(1) Description of Scene: Margaret Thatcher is encouraging people to get back to work to recover the British economy.

(2) Line:

MARGARET: You are the backbone of our nation!

*Small firms like Loveday's Ice Cream.*

*I passionately believe that it's the growth of small business into larger ones...  
that is critical for Britain's future.*

*That's the only way that we will produce jobs, real jobs, jobs that sustain.*

(3) Translation: 像甜心冰激凌这样的小企业

你们才是我们民族的支柱

我深信 小企业逐步做大...

将是未来英国发展的关键

这是能创造更多就业机会

真正稳定持久的就业机会的 唯一的方法

(4) Back Translation:

MARGARET: *Small companies such as sweetheart ice cream.*

*You really are our national pillar.*

*I firmly believe that small company gradually develops...*

*That will be the key to Britain's future...*

*This can create more job opportunities.*

*The only way to have the real, stable and sustainable job opportunities.*

The Chinese subtitles make key changes to their source and its use of corporeal images in this example. Personifying her personal and political beliefs, Thatcher identifies a type of business as the backbone of the British nation: a nation as living and breathing and physical as its citizens. Chinese keeps the image of central strength (the backbone is central to the body's skeleton). However, the image of strength used in the Chinese subtitles relates to construction and built entities as “民族的支柱” / “national pillar”. The subtitles thus arguably enhance the image of strength but they do so at the loss of personification. The subtitles in this example also make other changes. Though they translate the food stuff, *ice cream*, a food now available in but not originating from China, they change the company's name. “Loveday” in English is a surname. However, rather than transcribing the name, the subtitlers choose to translate the meaning of the first part of this company. They render “Loveday” as “甜心”/“sweetheart”, translating the term of endearment rather than the family name.

The Chinese translations relating to health metaphors reveal that equivalence is often possible in linguistic and cultural terms when talking about human bodies. Interestingly, though, differences still exist between the two languages in relation to bodily metaphors as my examples have shown.

### 3.7.6. Metaphors Relating to Political Opponents

Margaret Thatcher is known for her stinging attacks on the labour party. According to Charteris-Black (2005, p. 174), socialism, for the Conservative Party, is represented as an enemy state that has undertaken an invasion and occupation. Therefore, any measures to oppose socialism are conceived of as heroic efforts to resist an alien ideology. In this section, selected examples containing lexicalised metaphors associated with political opponents implicitly and/or explicitly will be discussed and analysed.

#### Example 15: Inspiring Conservative Leaders

(1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher's father encourages people to believe in the Conservative Party by promising them a bright future.*

(2) *Line:*

*MARGARET'S FATHER: We Conservatives believe in giving the freedom and opportunity to fulfil their own potential, especially the young. There's no good in pretending we're all equal... We're not all the same, never have been, never will be. We should encourage our children to aspire to achieve more than we have for our children today will be the leaders of tomorrow.*

(3) *Translation: 我们保守党人坚信给予民众自由及…*

*开发其潜力的机会 尤其是年轻一代*

*无需矫饰所谓平等…*

*我们生而存异现在如此 将来亦如是*

*我们更应鼓励自己的孩子 立志超越我辈的成就…*

*皆因今日之孩童许是明日之领袖*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET'S FATHER: We Conservative party members firmly believe to give people freedom and... opportunities to develop their potential especially for the younger generation There is no need to dissemble the so-called equality. We were born to be different for the present and also for the future We should encourage our children to achieve more than the achievement of the older generation... because children today perhaps will be leaders of tomorrow.*

While the subtitles here are able to render in linguistic terms the subject matter of the original film dialogue, their content is culturally very interesting in the target culture. Thatcher's words attack a belief in equality. In its place, her father's words push for individual success and ambition. Equality, he argues, is a pretence and individuals need to look to maximise their own potential. This contrasts starkly with the central philosophy of the People's Republic of China which requires that the welfare of the collective should always be put ahead of the right of any individual and that the government should create a harmonious socialist society (Warner and Zhu 2010, p. 285). The Chinese subtitles thus translate a political vision entirely at odds with the central political philosophy of the target culture. Thatcher's words attack principles at the heart of the Chinese Communist government. The Chinese subtitles may domesticate the imagery of the original but, in their word choice, they offer a different moral reading of Thatcher's Conservatism, which is diametrically opposed to Chinese Communism.

Example 16: The Shackles of Socialism

(1) *Description of Scene: Margaret Thatcher is asking for votes to support her political campaign.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: Now, as the test draws near, I ask your help.*

*That together we can shake off the shackles of socialism and restore to greatness this country that we love. And the only way is for the Conservatives to win!*

(3) *Translation:* 现今 大选临近 我需要你们的支持

让我们一起砸碎社会主义的镣铐

让辉煌重回这个你我深爱的国家

保守党获胜是实现这一目的的唯一途径

(4) *Back Translation:*

MARGARET: *Now general election is approaching I need your support*

*Let us smash socialism's shackle.*

*Let glory return to this country with which you and I are both in love.*

*The only way to achieve this goal is to let the Conservative party win.*

This example essentially construes Margaret Thatcher's political position and her reliance on a discourse of conflict that is reliant on antithetical metaphors. Thatcher's political opponents, the left wing, are depicted as imprisoning the United Kingdom. *Shackles* in English are a pair of fetters connected together by a chain used to fasten a prisoner's wrist or ankles together (*OED*). The archaism of the word in English underlines Thatcher's vision of socialism as constraining, out of touch nature of socialism. Her imagery underlines the strength of the Conservative Party as she implies that the nation collectively is strong enough to throw off and break the metal of its chains. The Chinese subtitles maintain this image of potency, arguably even increasing it by replacing *shake off* with “砸碎” / “smash”. Rather than using a modern option “手铐” / “handcuffs”, the Chinese subtitles render it as “镣铐”, an archaic word which means “manacles, leg-irons, fetters and handcuffs” (*C-E Dictionary*). However, in this context, this term is used metaphorically to refer to the political opponent of Conservatism. Interestingly, the vocabulary of crime, punishment and restraints proves to be largely equivalent. In contrast, China's experience of general elections does not map onto the political structure in Britain. Thus, while the subtitles can translate the words “general election” as “大选” / “big election”, the entity in question is not at all the same in political terms. In Thatcher's Britain, political parties of very different political beliefs fight for supremacy. In China, while people vote at a regional level, they vote to select individuals from one single party. There is thus, as Schleiermacher points out, a cultural gap between source text and target text, a gap which the subtitler can bridge in linguistic terms but not cultural terms (Krasemann, pp. 181-187).



Example 17: Thatcher's Political Opponents

(1) *Description of Scene: After the victory in the Falklands War, Thatcher makes a speech at the Parliament meeting to celebrate this moment.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: And I put it to the Honourable Member opposite...*

*that this is not a day for him to carp...  
find fault, demand inquiries...  
they will happen I can assure him of that...  
for we have nothing to hide, no...  
this is a day to put differences aside,  
to hold one's head high...  
and take pride in being British.*

(3) *Translation: 我也想提醒反对党的各位议员...*

*今天不是吹毛求疵...  
寻找错误 并给出质疑的时候  
他们一定会 这点我可以确认...  
但我们毫无隐瞒的必要 没有  
今天 我们需要搁置一切分歧  
扬眉吐气...  
为英国骄傲*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: I also want to remind every member from the opposition party...  
Today does not aim to blow apart the hairs upon a fur to discover  
any defect...  
It is not the time to find out mistakes and to question  
they surely will I confirm this point  
but it is not necessary to hide no  
today we need to put all disagreements aside  
Exhaling freely and expanding the eyebrows...*

While, in linguistic terms, there is significant translation loss in the opening line of this example, that loss is mitigated by the visual elements of the film. In British politics,

opposing parties sit on opposite sides of the House of Commons. Thatcher thus addresses “the Honourable Member opposite”. The Chinese subtitles address simply the opposition party and its representatives. It is less geographically and physically specific out of necessity. Likewise, it cannot replicate the term “Honourable Member”, a term which is one of the titles Members of Parliament (MPs) use during debates in Parliament (MPs do not refer to each other by name in an attempt to maintain order and politeness). MPs are referred to in different ways depending on whether they are from the same party (my Honourable friend), whether they are a practising lawyer (Honourable and Learned) or whether they are part of the privy council (Right Honourable) (Richards 1959, p. 417). The House of Parliament, therefore, has its own linguistic terminology and register which the subtitles cannot translate in cultural terms. The subtitles cannot replicate the linguistic politeness in formal terms of address which Thatcher uses at the same time to attack her political opponents. The subtitles also insert a very culturally specific translation of “to carp”, rendering it as “吹毛求疵” / “to blow apart the hairs upon a fur to discover any defect” (*C-E Dictionary*). This set phrase, or “chengyu” takes what is clearly in visible terms, a foreign political system and renders aspects of it in linguistically domesticated idiom.

To conclude, relating to political opponents, there is clearly a large cultural gap when moving between the Chinese and British political contexts. The subtitles adopt different ways of rendering the original and bridging this gap, often using set Chinese idioms to domesticate in part a political context which is necessarily alien.

### 3.7.7. Translating Political Rhetoric

According to Charteris-Black (2005, pp. 181-182), Margaret Thatcher’s political speeches are frequently constructed around conflict metaphors as she uses parallel entities in conflict. Meifang Zhang (2016, p. 8) in her analysis of President Xi Jinping’s public addresses evaluates their frequent use of parallelism as a rhetorical structure. Interestingly, this political parallelism also applies to Thatcher’s speeches in *The Iron Lady*.

Example 18: A Poem for Inaugural Speech

(1) *Description of Scene: Maragret Thatcher shares a poem by St. Francis of Assisi on the day she becomes Prime Minister. The poem is about bringing faith, hope, and harmony to the country.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: And now, I should like to share with you a prayer...*

*of St Francis of Assisi:*

*Where there is discord, may we bring harmony.*

*Where there is error, may we bring truth.*

*Where there is doubt, may we bring faith.*

*And where there is despair, may we bring hope.*

(3) *Translation: 而现在我想和各位分享...*

*圣方济的一段祷文:*

*混乱处, 我们带来和谐;*

*错误处, 我们带来真实;*

*怀疑处, 我们带来信任;*

*沮丧处, 我们带来希望*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: And now I want to share with everyone.*

*A passage of prayer from Shengfangji:*

*We bring harmony in confusion;*

*We bring truth in mistakes;*

*We bring trust in doubt;*

*We bring hope in despair.*

Thatcher's words come from a poem by St. Francis of Assisi. They thus refer to a cultural reference<sup>49</sup> in the mind of a British viewer. There is an inevitable translation loss for the Chinese subtitles which cannot make St. Francis of Assisi tangible for Chinese audiences. While the Chinese subtitles, like the British dialogue, introduce the poem as being by St. Francis of Assisi, this figure has no cultural presence or being for a Chinese audience. The reference thus serves as an empty symbol. Thatcher uses St. Francis of Assisi to promise people that she will bring the country and people "harmony, truth, faith and hope"

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<sup>49</sup> Chesterton, Gilbert Keith. 2008. Saint Francis of Assisi. Hendrickson Publishers.

regardless of any obstacles. Interestingly, she uses another person's words to translate her mission. Her act of speaking through another is in some ways echoed by the subtitles which translate another's words into a different culture. It is important to note that the poem Thatcher uses is structured around antithetical and binary positions: negative and positive. At the syntactic and rhetorical level, the example is of importance because the two political systems vary but the politicians choose the same parallel structure in their speech: "Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith. And where there is despair, may we bring hope". It is a feature of both political contexts and therefore the Chinese subtitles can replicate it into: "混乱处，我们带来和谐；错误处，我们带来真实；怀疑处，我们带来信任；沮丧处，我们带来希望" / "We bring harmony in confusion; we bring truth in mistakes; we bring trust in doubt; we bring hope in despair". It is not about the text necessarily, it is about the political form which despite the very different political systems is replicable. The subtitles do not have to transpose culturally because there is a cultural equivalent in China. We can translate fairly directly in terms of structure. The subtitles are at their most forceful, powerful and convincing when the rhetorical and syntactical effect is transferred. As a result, the translation shows a well-achieved equivalence in both form and effect. Therefore, cultural equivalence is possible in syntactic parallelism.

Furthermore, the use of parallel structure in politics has a long international history. One of the most famous inaugural speeches may be found in *The Gettysburg Address* by US President Abraham Lincoln. He states: "but, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground". By using the structure "we cannot" three times, he builds momentum and rhythm, clearly making his discourse as political. Likewise, in China, parallelism is frequently used by political leaders in their speeches. In the former President Jiang Zemin's *Three Represents*, the parallel pattern he puts forward is the following: "中国共产党要始终代表中国先进生产力的发展要求；中国共产党要始终代表中国先进文化的前进方向；中国共产党要始终代表中国最广大人民的根本利益" / "The Chinese Communist Party represents the development trends of advanced productive forces; the Chinese Communist Party represents the orientations of an advanced culture; the Chinese Communist Party represents the fundamental interests of

the overwhelming majority of the people of China” (Center 2000). Jiang Zemin, like Abraham Lincoln, uses a threefold repetition to mark his language as political. China’s endeavour in economic production, cultural development, and political consensus are emphasised via the use of repetition. Applying parallelism rhetorically and emotionally distinguishes the language (Roeh and Nir 1990, pp. 225-244). To be specific, the parallel form strengthens the position of leaders in political contexts (Katznelson 1997, p. 288). The subtitling recreates the rhetorical strategy of parallelism in this example.

**Example 19: Parallel Structure by Thatcher**

(1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher makes her regular visit to her doctor where she is supposed to receive treatment. However, she gives a “lecture” to her doctor to express her dissatisfaction towards certain people.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: Watch your thoughts, for they become words.*

*Watch your words, for they become actions.*

*Watch your actions, for they become habits.*

*Watch your habits, for they become character.*

*And watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.*

(3) *Translation: 想法决定言辞*

*言辞决定行为*

*行为决定习惯*

*习惯决定性格*

*性格决定命运 (出自英国诗人 Robert Herrick)*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: Thoughts decide words.*

*Words decide actions.*

*Actions decide habits.*

*Habits decide personalities.*

*Personalities decide destinies (by British poet Robert Herrick).*

In the final line of the translation shows that the subtitling convention is broken as amplification is added to information relating to the author of this work. Although its origin is kept, the Chinese subtitles merely retain the English form of the author’s name

instead of the commonly translated Chinese version despite the space constraints involved in the subtitling. Another parallelism with all its persuasiveness is again rendered into Chinese by the same parallel structure. Having cited a poem when becoming a Prime Minister, she cites another poem, again with parallel structures, when seeing her doctor.

Example 20: Parallel Structure by Thatcher

(1) *Description of Scene: Thatcher makes a public speech in the middle of one of the deepest recessions Britain has ever experienced.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: There are those who would say hold back.*

*There are those who would make us retreat.  
But we shall never give in to them,  
we shall never waver,  
not for a second in our determination to see this country prosper once again.*

(3) *Translation: 会有人期冀我们放弃*

*更会有人希望我们退却  
但我们绝不应向其妥协  
只要能让我们的国家重现辉煌  
这样的决定 我们就不该动摇一丝一毫*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MARGARET: There are people who would want us to give up.  
Even there are people who would want us to retreat.  
But we never respond to them.  
As long as bringing our country glory once again.  
This kind of decision we should not even waver the smallest scrap.*

As underlined, cultural equivalence is provided via a Chinese four-character idiom for Chinese audiences to experience the cultural equivalent of political conviction as “我们就不该动摇一丝一毫”/ “we should not even waver the smallest scrap” (C-E Dictionary). Interestingly, in this example, parallelism is not completely transferred. The Chinese subtitles structure itself in parallel terms in the first two lines with the repeated “会有”/“there are”, but do not achieve a parallel structure in the remaining two lines.

In summary, the subtitling in *The Iron Lady* successfully echoes Thatcher's key rhetorical strategy, parallelism. Cultural equivalence is maintained often by Chinese four-character idiomatic expressions. The ultimate ideological effect is achieved by the cumulative use of rhetorical strategies for the equivalence of cultural experience.

### 3.8. Conclusion

Using Charteris-Black's classifications of conflict metaphors in Margaret Thatcher's speeches during her premiership, as well as adding Meifang Zhang's categories of correlational metaphor, contrast, repetition and parallelism, this chapter has sought to analyse the specificities of subtitling Thatcher's politics in *The Iron Lady* (2011) for Chinese audiences. What it has revealed is that while I have identified different rhetorical strategies in political discourse between Britain and China, the subtitles to *The Iron Lady* adopt a more dynamic approach to the subtitling process. In places the subtitles domesticate heavily by using Chinese four-character idioms which clearly anchor the viewer in a Chinese linguistic context even while they watch a film with a clearly foreign origin and values. There are key moments of cultural equivalence and interestingly, they relate to bodily functions, *shackles* and the use of parallel structures in political discourses. The subtitles convey a Conservative ideology in a context entirely opposed to that ideology. They translate thus both the foreign language and the foreign political culture. What the subtitles reveal in relation to this case study is that subtitling is a complex negotiation between source and target culture and it is above all a dynamic process. The subtitles do not follow one static approach or one set translation theory. Rather, they adopt approaches from across the spectrum of translation theory to create subtitles which are driven by very different imperatives: the need of the audience, the requirement to convey the source text and culture as well as the need to obey the cultural conventions of the receiving culture. Although the different political systems in Britain and China draw on the same set of political rhetoric (contrast, parallelism) and use multiple translation strategies, they portray key political figures and political events in contrasting and often incompatible ways. It is essential to investigate the subtitling process and the transferal of linguistic and political values. Such intricate processes reveal the ways in which the Chinese authorities interpret the foreign languages and politics of the target culture and

thus can influence the understanding of the foreign languages and culture amongst their target audiences.



## 4. Subtitling a Historical Film: Cultural and Temporal Transfer in *Oliver Twist* (2005)

### 4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter, taking into account the political contexts of Britain and China, explored how subtitles shape Margaret Thatcher's politics to meet the needs of the Chinese target audiences. The present chapter will focus on how history is translated in a key case study: *Oliver Twist* (2005). The aim of this chapter is to answer a key question: how is British history mediated through Chinese history in the subtitling of this film? In order to answer this question, the film *Oliver Twist* (2005) will be analysed to explore the cultural and temporal transfer of nineteenth-century Britain to twenty-first-century China. The chapter will clarify why the Chinese authorities selected this film and how Chinese history interacts with it. *Oliver Twist*, a world classic set in early nineteenth-century England<sup>50</sup>, has been adapted many times into films. The film was released on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2006 (NetEase 2006) in China, one year after its original release. This 2006 adaptation, however, is particularly significant as its Chinese authorised subtitles mediate the nineteenth-century British history for a contemporary Chinese audience. But this adaptation creates various problems of translation as it negotiates the cultural and linguistic transfer between early Victorian England and twenty-first-century China. Charles Dickens's historical vision is difficult to translate as the subtitles may have to transfer language, culture and the historical era, all of which are alien for the Chinese target audiences. To respond to the challenge that translators and audiences face, examples drawn from the subtitles are grouped under Eva Wai-Yee Hung's (1980, p. 122) suggested aspects of Dickens's world – "religious beliefs, social conventions, biblical and literary allusions and elements of the Victorian era". In this chapter, I employ these categories to analyse the cultural and temporal transfer between Britain and China in relation to the historical specificities of *Oliver Twist*.

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<sup>50</sup> Given that *Oliver Twist* was serialised at the commencement of the Victorian era in 1837 (Grubb 1941, p. 209; Kuhn 1987, p. 111), the belief and the customs of the Victorian era was thus narrowly reflected in the novel/ adapted film.

As noted, this chapter highlights four historically-laden groups of examples in the early Victorian era of England to discuss problems caused by linguistic and cultural disparities, and to observe how the subtitles provide viable solutions to these problems. The chapter will examine specifically how the film was selected, subtitled and released and the technique of translation that enables subtitles to translate a historical past, and how it made use of archaisms and modern terms. Unsurprisingly, the subtitling process of linguistic and cultural transfer via this foreign historical film for a contemporary Chinese audience are challenging. To identify the challenges of translating the historical context in the subtitles, this chapter will centre around three main questions regarding why and how history is translated:

- (1) Why did the Chinese authorities select this film to be subtitled?
- (2) What challenges does the subtitling of this nineteenth-century British film present when being translated into a Chinese context?
- (3) What strategies does the film use to convey nineteenth-century British history to a Chinese audience and to navigate the linguistic, cultural and historical differences between Britain and China?

#### 4.2. *Oliver Twist* in the British and Chinese Contexts

This novel is based on three historical features of nineteenth-century England. The novel records the poor suffering in the miserable poorhouse, the maltreatment of children and a tremendous population shift as unemployed migrants move from villages to cities (Sertkan and Gülperi 2007, pp. 34-37). These events were influenced by the passing of the Poor Law<sup>51</sup> in 1834 and rapid industrialisation (Sertkan and Gülperi 2007, p. 34). Thus, *Oliver Twist* not only exposes the dreadful conditions of the workhouse, but the poverty, juvenile abuse, theft and prostitution, etc. in nineteenth-century England. The novel shows the darker side of capitalist society placed in the foreground (Sertkan and Gülperi 2007, p. 34).

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<sup>51</sup> Cody, Lisa Forman. 2000. The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform: Women, Reproduction, and Political Economy in England's New Poor Law of 1834. *Journal of Women's History* 11(4), pp. 131-156.

Social satire, also known as “小说”/ “xiaoshuo”, is a key literary genre in China and has intriguing similarities with Dickens’s work. Satire and condemnation, aimed at “bringing about immediate social, educational or political reform” (Hung 1980, p. 22), were produced in the Qing dynasty (1644-1912) by intellectuals. “Xiaoshuo” is a term which was first used in the works of Zhuang Zi<sup>52</sup>. “Xiaoshuo” initially included petty sayings, random thoughts or observations against the teachings of the sages. Lu Xun<sup>53</sup> later developed it as a genre deriving from fairy tales and legends. The late Qing dynasty (1840-1911) saw the peak of “xiaoshuo”. “Xiaoshuo” was regarded as “the soul of the nation”<sup>54</sup> according to Liang Qichao. The Chinese novelists of early twentieth century gradually strengthened their country and educated the common people by creating “xiaoshuo” (Hung 1980, pp. 14-15). Through the use of satire, Chinese writers instilled new ideas by learning from their western counterparts. The function of “xiaoshuo” attempts to expose and satirise the existing social and political problems at the time of their creation. Chinese novelists used their works to awaken their countrymen. As more people became dissatisfied with the existing social and political conditions, the number of “xiaoshuo” increased. Social and political downturns were the keys to the development of “xiaoshuo”. With the failure of the 1898 reform<sup>55</sup> and the Boxer Uprising<sup>56</sup>, the Qing government failed to avert social chaos. The inefficient, incompetent and corrupt officials ignited the fire of dissatisfaction, which had been fuelled by foreign invaders. Under such circumstances, “xiaoshuo” in consequence served as an effective instrument for intellectuals to voice their revolutionary longings, also resulting in a wider movement in favour of mass education and the modernisation of China (Hung 1980, pp. 18-19).

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<sup>52</sup> Zhuang Zi was among the very earliest philosophers in ancient China to think critically on the issues of power and knowledge. His principle of philosophy is “无”/ phonetically “wu” (“nonbeing”) that functions as radical negation to establish a new way of life, which is combined with freedom and human rights to focus on a value in itself (Zhuangzi et al. 1999, p. viii).

<sup>53</sup> Lu Xun, writer, critic and essayist, is a leading figure of modern and classical Chinese literature in twentieth-century China. He is also influential in global literature (Schwarcz 2014, p. 837).

<sup>54</sup> Quoted by Ying Hu. 1995. *The Translator Transfigured: Lin Shu and the Cultural Logic of Writing in the Late Qing*. *Positions* 3(1), pp. 69-96.

<sup>55</sup> Also known as Hundred Days of Reform, the imperial Qing government attempted to renovate the Chinese state and social system (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica 2008).

<sup>56</sup> The Boxer Rebellion, Boxer Uprising or Yi He Tuan Movement, was a peasant movement in China between 1899 and 1901, directly against imperialist expansion and associated Christian missionary activity (Purcell 2010, p. ix).

Therefore, Dickens's novel and Chinese "xiaoshuo" have similarities as they are both written by reform-minded intellectuals seeking to reach a large reading populace. Dickens's novel was translated by Lin Shu (1852-1924), a man convinced of the need for social and political reform in China. Intriguingly, Lin Shu spoke no English (Pollard 1998, p. 2). His translation was the result of a partnership between his collaborators and himself. His collaborators provided verbal translation of the text and Lin Shu accordingly produced the written form. Therefore, a retranslation of the Chinese text originally provided by his collaborators was created (Pollard 1998, p. 15). Chinese readers were largely exposed to the social criticism in Dickens's novels via Lin's translation (Hung 1980, p. 39). In the preface to the translation of *Oliver Twist*, Lin Shu described the way in which Dickens took great pains to select the topics of difficulties faced by the lower classes and wrote novels in order to provoke social and political reform (Hung 1980, p. 38). Lin Shu associated the similar urgency for reforms in China by translating Dickens's novel for a nineteenth-century Chinese reader (Hung 1980, pp. 38-39). As satire was needed in nineteenth-century China, Dickens's novels held a strong appeal in China (Hung 1980, p. 41). Undeniably, Dickens, as a result of his social analysis, is an attractive writer to Chinese audiences. Indeed, Wolfgang Bauer (1964, p. 62) ranks Dickens as the twelfth most popular western author in China in the period between 1949 to 1960.

This chapter's chosen case study film offers a historical vision of early nineteenth-century England. One previous film adaptation of *Oliver Twist* has already been imported to China: David Lean's 1948 adaptation was dubbed in Chinese in 1958 by the Shanghai Film Dubbing Studio. The 2005 film, a film from the point of its moment of release that may reflect key social status of contemporary Chinese era, was China's second cinematic vision of Dickens's novel. It will be the case study in this chapter because this chapter considers the subtitled form instead of the dubbed medium<sup>57</sup>. Lean's 1948 film was dubbed into Chinese and not subtitled.

### 4.3. Why *Oliver Twist*?

Three possible reasons that may justify the importation of this film by the Chinese authorities will be discussed in this section. These are related to three periods of time,

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<sup>57</sup> For further details of Lean's adaptation, see Paganoni (2010, pp. 3-5).

first, the political and cultural background of China in the period of 2000-2010; secondly, the release of the Chinese subtitled film in 2006, and thirdly the background of nineteenth-century Britain.

Both China and Britain share, despite their differences, common social problems. There is a cultural link between Britain and China in the era when *Oliver Twist* (2005) was released in both countries. In 2006, when *Oliver Twist* was released in China, China was facing increasingly serious social problems relating to the divide between the poor and the rich, whilst the government was busy preparing the infrastructural facilities for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Preparations for the Beijing Olympics caused a sharp imbalance in society (Lam 2007, p. 6). Consequently, there are arguably conscious or unconscious associations between Chinese society and the issues related in *Oliver Twist* where the enforcement of the New Poor Law Act, rapid industrialisation and mass migration led to a social, cultural and political downturn in London. In the creation of *Oliver Twist*, the focus is on the stark contrast between the consuming upper class and the starving lower strata as indicated in the novel at beginning of the 1830s (Ledger 2007, p. 79). Moreover, the enforcement of the controversial New Poor Law of 1834 underlines that child abuse, theft and prostitution were prevalent. Though offered relief by the Union Workhouse, according to Sally Ledger (2007, p. 90), the poor would rather commit suicide, starve or emigrate than go into the prison-like workhouse. In one scene young Oliver is desperate with hunger and recklessness and repeatedly asks the overweight master of the workhouse for more food: "Please sir, I want some more" (Dickens 1966, p. 15). Hearing Oliver's demand, Mr. Limbkins has an exaggerated reaction, threatening Oliver: "that boy will be hung" (Dickens 1966, p. 17). While the vision in Dickens's novel is far starker and harsher than the situation in China in 2006, overlaps remain as China too had something of an unbalanced economy and clear social differences. This economic imbalance and social divide are clear when one considers the decade in which *Oliver Twist* was released in China.

China hosted the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. China benefited by hosting for Olympic Games as they were beneficial for the city of Beijing and nation in terms of the global hierarchy and tourism (Owen, 2005 cited in Short et al, 2000). Beijing intended to use the Olympics as a catalyst for infrastructure, technology and communication, but it was not a

wise investment from a social welfare standpoint (Owen 2005, p. 11). Many projects involving transportation, communication and especially environmental improvement certainly benefited social welfare, but these benefits were overshadowed by the cost. Many of the sports facilities fell into disuse after the event. Furthermore, in relation to the fiscal decisions of the government, rather than attracting broadcasting sponsorships, a more direct expense of resident tax was caused. Another acute problem for Beijing was the displacement of local inhabitants. Such an event limited the liveable space in a city of over thirteen-million people which certainly led to both temporary inconvenience and permanent displacement for its poorest citizens (Owen 2005, pp. 11-12). China made these massive investments in venues and infrastructures, while failing to construct a socially balanced and environmentally friendly society. China experienced a rapid economic and structural development but it did not accommodate the accompanying social issues. In 2005, these issues led to 87,000 mass incidents which included riots, demonstrations and other disturbances (Lam 2007, p. 6). The construction of a chemical factory became a significant root cause of the large-scale demonstration in mid-2007 held by middle-class residents of Xiamen. This incident underlines that the discontent spread from peasants to urban dwellers due to substantially disparate incomes (Lam 2007, p. 6).

In addition to the social overlap between Dickens's novel and China in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is also important to underline the literary overlap between *Oliver Twist* and key Chinese trends. The ending in *Oliver Twist* is consistent with the traditional Chinese Confucian culture. This culture raises people's awareness of gratitude and forgiveness, which is also in line with Chinese cultural values, especially to establish the harmonious society as put forward by President Hu Jintao. At the Sixth Central Committee Plenum<sup>58</sup> in late 2006, the ideal of constructing a "harmonious society", a term used in reference to a socio-economic order in which all Chinese can coexist in peace and harmony was explored and discussed (Lam 2007, p. 6). The authorities proposed to act as coordinator to regulate the distribution of revenue among disparate classes and sectors, and adequately address contradictions in the social order. Therefore, the call to set up "scientific and effective mechanisms" to tackle existing social

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<sup>58</sup> Central Committee Plenum is a political conference held annually by the top leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

problems was highlighted as being of urgent importance (Lam 2007, p. 6). There are thus social explorations underway both in Dickens's novel and the Chinese society at whom the subtitled adaptation is targeted.

Furthermore, the wish that good overrides evil and that justice will prevail in even the most adverse circumstances (Dickens 1966, pp. xiii-xiv) correspond to Chinese people's belief in benevolence and harmony. With great friendliness and politeness, Oliver expresses his gratitude to Fagin when he visits the condemned man in his cell, thanking him for his philanthropy. Such an insistence on gratitude could possibly be reminiscent of Confucius's belief that lifelong learning cultivates moral and intellectual virtues such as humanism, forgiveness, honesty, courage and strength (Kim 2003, p. 79). Such dual reflection is compatible with one of the Chinese virtues, “仁” /phonetically “ren”, the all-compassing virtue in traditional Confucian culture (Kim 2003, p. 86). “仁” (“benevolence”) and “礼” (“rite”) are two important beliefs in Confucius's sayings on critical learning. “礼” (“rite”) regulates human conduct, operating in various social contexts and the political arena. It not only stresses the promotion of rituals and righteousness, but also places heavy emphasis on establishing cultural values (Kim 2003, p. 78).

It is thus clear that when the Chinese authorities imported *Oliver Twist*, they did so at a time when there were intriguing social similarities between the adapted film and the target culture. They also selected and imported this film as it is based on a novel which may resonate with traditional Chinese literary genres such as “xiaoshuo” and key elements of Confucius's thoughts on existence. Furthermore, the film, in its ending, resonates with contemporary political and social initiatives at the time of its release in China under President Hu Jintao.

#### 4.4. Theoretical Framework

Having examined the possible key justifications for the Chinese authorities to release and subtitle this film, this section will now outline the theoretical structures in terms of cultural and translational approaches which it will use to read its case study film. The case film, *Oliver Twist*, practises a diversity of translations: at times the subtitles use archaic language and at times they modernise with the target audience in mind. In relation to archaism, this chapter will use the cultural theory of Andrew Higson (1996a, p. 233) as he

writes on how films translate heritage. It will also use the translation theory of William Morris, who believes that the translator should immerse his/her reader in an archaic past (Bassnett 2013, p. 76).

Higson's theory of heritage is key to this chapter. That *Oliver Twist* is a heritage piece is clear. It abounds with the archaic language and dialects of the early nineteenth-century England period that pose challenges for the subtitlers. Higson's work on heritage film underlines the thirst of audiences to go back to an impossible, inaccessible past for which they are nostalgic (Higson 1996a, p. 233). According to his description of heritage film in Britain, it "projects a particular image of the national past" (Higson 1996b, p. 235). Higson's theory is particularly intriguing in relation to this chapter which seeks to evaluate not how a British heritage is translated for a British audience, but how a British heritage is conveyed and exported for a modern Chinese audience. *Oliver Twist* is a clear expression of an imagined British past which is at once nostalgic and problematic (Higson 1997, p. 275). This chapter will consider the ways in which this very British past is sold to the contemporary Chinese audience.

It will suggest that the Chinese authorities are using the heritage of another nation simultaneously to explore their own values via cultural and temporal transfer in the subtitling practice. Furthermore, this chapter will marry Higson's vision of heritage with William Morris's view of historical translation. William Morris (1834-1896) was an English designer, poet, novelist and translator. He was also a social activist. Despite not speaking Norse Icelandic, Morris published translations of a series of Icelandic Sagas. To produce the translation, Morris first relied on his friend, Eiríkr Magnússon, who taught him the basics of Icelandic and then translated the original prose tales into English (Faulkner 2013, pp. 249-250). Morris in turn rewrote Eiríkr Magnússon's initial translations in poetic form with an attempt to "retain the word order of the original, to echo its syntax, and to use archaisms – wherever possible Icelandic/English cognates" (France 2000, p. 554). He believes that it was more important to plunge a reader into the sense of historic era than to focus on linguistic accuracy (Bassnett 2013, p. 76). Morris's translation<sup>59</sup> of the Icelandic *Volsunga Saga*<sup>60</sup> in 1876 uses an archaicising approach as "he very much wanted English

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<sup>59</sup> For further detail on Morris's approach to translation, see Britain et al. (1982, p. 78).

<sup>60</sup> See Britain, Ian. 1982. *Against the Age: An Introduction to William Morris*. pp. 62-86.



readers to recognise the greatness of the saga, and softened it in some respects to achieve this” (Britain et al. 1982, p. 78). The theories of Higson and Morris are linked in their common discussion on how one translates a historical past for an audience who is thirsty for it.

Lin Shu, the Chinese translator of Dickens’s, like Morris also advocated the use of archaism, retaining classical Chinese to interpret his version of modernity in the West (Chen 2013, p. 362). Both Lin and Morris reworked their collaborators’ English translation into archaic forms of their own languages. As one of the most important translators of the late Qing dynasty, Lin Shu (1852-1924), was not only nostalgic in his use of classical Chinese but also a reformer in his career of shaping modern Chinese culture (Chen 2013, p. 362). He promoted China’s classicism and also made great efforts to preserve China’s cultural heritage in education. Lin Shu echoes William Morris’s proposition of keeping archaism in form and language, keeping a strong sense of a past, however obscure and incomprehensible it might be to the reader (Bassnett 2013, p. 75). While there are strengths to Morris’s theory and that of Lin Shu (an archaic translation allows its reader to access to the temporal past), they are also dangerous. Archaic language runs the risk of a loss of readers as the translated language verges on the incomprehensible. In association with the theories of Higson and Morris, this chapter will also use the historical categories characterised as key by Eva Wai-Yee Hung (1980) in her work *A Critical Study of Chinese Translations of Oliver Twist and David Copperfield*. Hung identifies historical specificities in the Chinese translation in the areas of “religious belief, social conventions, biblical and literary allusions and elements of the Victorian era” (1980, p. 122). This chapter will explore the way in which the Chinese subtitles to the 2005 film adaptation navigate these areas of British historical specificities. The chapter will analyse whether the subtitles archaize or modernise, considering whether and how the chapter works to mediate and to speak to both Chinese and British cultures.

#### 4.5. Case Analysis

Eva Wai-Yee Hung (1980, p. 122), in her thesis *A Critical Study of Chinese Translations of Oliver Twist and David Copperfield* proposes four key features which she suggests are characteristics of Dickens’s work and remain basically unfamiliar to Chinese readers. They

therefore cause translational problems and will be used to structure this chapter. They are “religious beliefs, social conventions, biblical and literary allusions, and even the dress and hairstyle of the Victorian era” (Hung 1980, p. 122). Since Hung focuses on the translation of the novel *Oliver Twist* while this chapter concentrates on the medium of subtitles, her last category specifically on “the dress and hairstyle of the Victorian era” is not completely encompassed in the Chinese subtitles of this modern film version of *Oliver Twist*. Therefore, this chapter summarises Hung’s last category into a broader category, elements of the Victorian era and the way in which they fit into the medium of the Chinese subtitles.

#### 4.5.1. Religious Terminology

As an initial point, Hung’s work makes specific reference to *Oliver Twist* in relation to one of her chosen categories, “religious beliefs”. She analyses the religious faith of the Victorian Age in relation to the Chinese language and culture with the following comment:

Dickens shared fully this Christian cultural tradition with his contemporaries, and his novels reflect naturally something of that tradition in its value and its language. In the absence of an exact counterpart in the Chinese tradition, the references to religious beliefs, observances and language pose problems in translation. ...Potential readers of the bai-hua<sup>61</sup> translations would be more knowledgeable about Christian beliefs and observations since they were comparatively exposed to western culture (Hung 1980, pp. 123-124).

As Hung suggests (1980, p. 123), although translating Christianity posed challenging problems in the Chinese translation, Chinese people were aware of the prevalence of Christianity as early as the sixteenth century. Interestingly, the translations of the Turkish versions of *Oliver Twist*<sup>62</sup> domesticates every aspect related to Christianity into Muslim beliefs in keeping with the prevalence of religious-conservative ideology in Turkey (Sertkan and Gülperi 2007, p. 72). Unlike the Turkish adaptation which domesticated Christian doctrine, the Chinese subtitles maintain the biblical context while using dynamic strategies. This chapter’s analysis sets out to demonstrate how the subtitling of

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<sup>61</sup> “白话”, phonetically, “bai hua” is related to vernacular language which is a simplified writing style, opposed to classical Chinese. This style of language enables the expression of new ideas in daily approachable language (Hasergin 2016, p. 6).

<sup>62</sup> Given the records of the Turkish National Library, the novel *Oliver Twist* has been translated by sixteen different translators from 1949 to 2004 (Sertkan and Gülperi 2007, p. 38). According to Kamer Sertkan and Sert Gülperi (2007, p. 72), all those translated versions were used domestication in relation to the transfer of Christianity into Muslim.

nineteenth-century British history in *Oliver Twist* speaks to Chinese values and culture in relation to religious beliefs and terms of religious origin, as the following examples will underline.

**Example 1 Religious Terminology: Parish**

(1) *Description of Scene: An orphan, Oliver Twist, is transferred from workhouse to the parish by a beadle.*

(2) *Line: MR.BUMBLE: This is the boy.*

*Born here in the workhouse.*

*Moved to the parish farm.*

*Nine years old today.*

*Time to be moved back here.*

(3) *Translation: 就是这个孩子*

*出生于救济院 在教区农场长大*

*今年已经 9 岁*

*正好是该回来的年纪*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MR.BUMBLE: This is the child.*

*born at rescue institution growing up at the parochial farm*

*He is nine years old this year.*

*It is time to come back.*

*Parish*, a term key in the church of England, is a small administrative district typically having its own church and a priest or pastor (*OED*). Martin Whitby (1992, p. 92) suggests that such is the agricultural structure of most rural areas in nineteenth-century Britain that the parish farm is one of the basic units of the parish agricultural environment. Chinese has no direct word for *parish* as the religious history of the nation is markedly different from Britain. However, the subtitles choose an associated equivalent: “教区”/“parochial”. Interestingly, the more common expression for *parish* in Chinese is “教堂”/“church” as China does have churches. The existence of churches in China is a manifestation of the expansion of Christianity thanks to the action of Western missionaries (LeMond 1997, p. 153). It is necessary to point out though that, it might seem

unnatural that the Buddhist hierarchy has accepted the establishment of another religion, Christianity, within its domain. As early as the Tang dynasty, the Chinese authorities were tolerant of small and unthreatening religions finding their way into China from elsewhere. As church buildings proliferated, the population became aware of Christianity (LeMond 1997, p. 145). Thus, the subtitles are able to engage with the religious history of Britain because that religious history has a recognisable foothold in China.

Example 2 Religious Terminology: Amen

(1) *Description of Scene: The parish boys pray to God before they have their daily meal.*

(2) *Line: THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: O Lord God...*

*... for the blessing of this generous  
and beautiful meal...  
... that thou hast placed before us...  
...we give thanks. Amen...*

(3) *Translation: 至圣的上帝...*

*正因您的无比慷慨和仁慈...  
我们才有如此丰盛膳食...  
感谢您的恩德, 阿门*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: The sacreddest God...*

*Just because of your extraordinary generosity and mercy.  
We thereby have such sufficient food.  
Thanks your benevolence virtue, a men.*

In English, *Amen*<sup>63</sup> is uttered at the end of a prayer or hymn, meaning “so be it” (OED). The subtitles transliterate *Amen* into Chinese with its phonetic form “阿门” / “a men” making no reference to the religious origin. The Chinese characters (“阿门” / “a men”) represent the phonetic equivalent of the English *Amen*. The subtitles thus foreignise the word *Amen*, but they do so in a way which remains comprehensible thanks to the visual context of the scene. When Chinese Christians worship, they end their prayers specifically

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<sup>63</sup> The use of *Amen* also appears at the beginning of the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels or of oaths and emphatic statements (Strugnell 1974, p. 177).

with a transliteration of *Amen*. The subtitles thus base their translation decisions in this area on contemporary Christian practice in China, a practice which may or may not be comprehensible to the viewer. It is important to remember however that the subtitles do not function in isolation but are complemented by the visual images of the film which, at this moment, actively show the boys at prayer. Read in association, the images and the transliterated religious language make some sense regardless of the belief and knowledge of the viewer. Without the visual Christian context on screen, *Amen* might make little sense in Chinese. However, it is worth pointing out that at the end of Buddhist prayers features: “南无阿弥陀佛” (“Nan wu e mi tuo fo” or “Namo Amitabha”). The formula is symbolic in its sound and repetition, it is not referential in conceptual terms. There is thus an equivalent for the incantatory value of *Amen* (Xu and Tian 2013, p. 194).

Example 3 Religious Terminology: Christian

(1) *Description of Scene: The boys are persuading Oliver to continue stealing things while a dog is laughably described as a virtuous Christian because he always follows his owner’s instructions.*

(2) *Line: JACK: What a pity he ain’t a prig.*

*CHARLEY: He don’t (sic) know what’s good for him.*

*JACK: I suppose you don’t know what a prig is.*

*OLIVER: Yes, I do. It’s a...*

*It’s a thief. You’re one, aren’t you?*

*JACK: Yes, I am. And so we all are. Down to the dog...*

*And he is the downest one of the lot.*

*.....*

*CHARLEY: He’s an out-and-out Christian, he is.*

(3) *Translation: 可惜他不是我们圈里的*

*-谁让他不知好歹*

*-你还不知道什么是“三只手”吧?*

*-我知道, 三只手就是...*

*就是指小偷*

*你就算一个, 对吗?*

-没错，我们都是，包括那只狗

它是最听话的一个

.....

-它是最忠实的基督徒

(4) Back Translation:

*JACK: What a pity he is not one of us.*

*CHARLEY: He does not know what is good for him.*

*JACK: You haven't known what "three hands" are?*

*OLIVER: I know, three hands are...*

*It means thief.*

*You are one, aren't you?*

*JACK: Yes, we all are, including that dog.*

*It is the most obedient.*

.....

*CHARLEY: It is the most faithful Ji du disciple.*

Hung's category "religious beliefs" is embodied in this example in relation to the religion of Christianity. The example makes a sarcastic use of the term *Christian* as it applies it to a dog. The humour in this scene is generated as the text calls on, in English, the reader's biblical knowledge. Oliver is urged to commit an unchristian act. The boys urge him to break one of the commandments and steal. In contrast, an animal is hailed as a good Christian for following its owner's instructions. Dickens's boys use the vocabulary of Christianity to try to persuade Oliver to do unchristian things. The Chinese subtitles replicate this humour by using the accepted term for Christian in China "基督徒" ("Ji du disciple") and applying it to a dog. "Ji du" is the phonetic equivalent in Chinese of "Jesus". It is a widely received concept in Chinese though its origin is recognisably foreign. While this application of biblical language to a non-human may appear sacrilegious, it is worth remembering that the bible underscores the interrelation between human and animals (Bible Society New 2015, Genesis 2:19; Job 12:7-10). Both the English source and the Chinese subtitles are innately embedded in Christian teaching and ideology.

Example 4 Religious Terminology: Catechism

(1) *Description of Scene: Fagin teaches Oliver how to steal. At this moment, he mentions Jack Dawkins who is really good at stealing.*

(2) *Line: FAGIN: Take the Dodger's word for it.*

*He understands the catechism  
of his trade.*

(3) *Translation: 听机灵鬼的话...*

*他可是相当懂行的*

(4) *Back Translation: FAGIN: Take clever ghost's words for it.*

*He indeed knows the business.*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), *catechism* is defined as “a summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers, used for religious instruction”. Fagin, in the film uses the noun in an inappropriate context in order to describe the trade of theft. Christian religious doctrine prescribes that Christians do not steal. Fagin, however, uses the vocabulary of that Christian doctrine to commend one of his pupils in relation to theft. There is thus a humour relating to religious belief in the original dialogue as Fagin is a thief and he is training others as thieves by using a religious word *Catechism*. The religious word applies in a non-religious context. However, the subtitles do not maintain either the metaphor or the humour of the religious origin, but use an explication “他可是相当懂行的” / “he indeed knows the business” (*C-E Dictionary*). What is presented here is the descriptive equivalence for the universal receptors (Newmark and Hall 1988, p. 103). Both metaphor and humour are lost in the Chinese subtitles. Religion actually advocates no stealing and ironically the religious word is being used to promote a non-religious act of theft. The subtitles eradicate the biblical and religious origin by means of explication to make a transfer in their choice of languages.

To summarise, the above four examples illustrate that different translational and cultural strategies are used when conveying religious beliefs in the source film. While explication was a key strategy when subtitling religious terms such as *parish* into modern Chinese, the subtitling of *Amen* adopted a transliteration strategy which is also embedded in contemporary Chinese Christianity. In the third example, subtitles are able to translate the humour of their source by replicating the theology which lies behind it. The religious

terminology of *catechism* fails to cross national boundaries and is replaced by Chinese linguistic equivalence that allows audiences to comprehend meaning via explication without the accompanying source imagery.

#### 4.5.2. Biblical Allusions

As religious terminology and biblical allusions are innately related, this section will focus on the latter consideration. According to Hung (1980, p. 133), “Biblical and Literary Allusions” are an integral part of the English cultural heritage in *Oliver Twist*. There are frequent detailed literary and biblical references in relation to key characters. These references are significant for what they reveal about the subtitler’s approach towards such allusions.

##### Example 5 Biblical Allusions: Cain and Abel

(1) *Description of Scene: Since Oliver is badly injured, the Artful Dodger is looking after him.*

(2) *Line: BILL: What you done (sic) with that boy?*

*Where is he?*

*FAGIN: Safe and sound.*

*The Dodger’s minding him.*

*They’re as close as Cain and Abel.*

(3) *Translation: 你把那孩子怎样了?*

*他人呢?*

*-他很安全，机灵鬼在看着他*

*他们现在都形影不离了*

(4) *Back Translation: BILL: What have you done with that boy?*

*Where is he?*

*FAGIN: He is very safe, clever ghost is looking after him.*

*They are now after each other like shadows.*

The original film dialogue takes a religious and cultural approach to this biblical and literary allusion, *Cain and Abel*. Biblical story tells that *Cain and Abel* are the children of Adam and Eve. They can only be understood in the light of the religious and social conditions of the earliest traditions of the Hebrews (Hooke 1939, pp. 58-59). This classic



tale of two brothers, sons of Adam and Eve, describes how Cain murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy (Hooke 1939, p. 59). Interestingly, it is rendered in the Chinese subtitles with a clear domestic expression, “形影不离” / “to be after each other like shadows” (*C-E Dictionary*). While the original English dialogue may imply the metaphor of brotherhood, as well as the ultimate self-annihilation between brothers in the religious story, the Chinese subtitles domesticate it with a four-character Chinese idiom, which clearly means “inseparable as form and shadow” in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* (1970). A domesticating and explanatory strategy has apparently been adopted. This domestic expression works fluently in the Chinese discourse. Another key feature is that Oliver Twist is like Abel and the Artful Dodger is like Cain, as Abel is pure while Cain kills. There is an extra layer of irony attached to the original, Oliver (Abel) and the Artful Dodger (Cain) once were close “inseparable as form and shadow”. In the Genesis story, after murdering Abel, Cain claims to not know where his brother is. In the film, a physical separation between the Artful Dodger and Oliver occurs after the Artful Dodger betrays Oliver. The subtitles construct the same sense of closeness between the brothers in an ironic way as the film’s dialogue does but there is key translation loss as the Chinese subtitles eradicate the violence of the source image, a violence entirely appropriate to the setting of *Oliver Twist*.

The notion of domestication is relevant to Cohen’s statement that readers receive a transparent language in translated form to communicate a foreign culture (Venuti 1986, p. 30). By using the four-character Chinese epigram, the translation speaks to the domestic audiences ensuring “an irresistible stream of narrative” (Venuti 1986, p. 30). But the biblical allusion is lost in the subtitles and replaced by a domestic four-character discourse in the Chinese context. The subtitles regarding biblical allusions indicate domesticating strategy that the subtitles employ when translating religion. Interestingly, when translating *Cain and Abel*, the subtitles make alterations, recasting the archaic origin into a more traditional Chinese equivalence via the use of four-character idiom.

#### 4.5.3. Social Conventions

According to Hung (1980, p. 152), social conventions are key to understanding Victorian society. However, the cultural, temporal and linguistic gap between Dickens’s source and

the target audience for this film make such social conventions hard to convey. Hung (1980, pp. 152-178) focuses more on the legal system, names (including personal names and territorial names), currency, food, drink and games. This section however, will use Hung's term elastically to consider these social conventions in nineteenth-century England.

#### 4.5.3.1. Legal System

##### Example 6 the Legal System: Beadle

(1) *Description of Scene: Soon after Oliver Twist twice asks for more gruel than allowed, the master shrieks aloud for the beadle.*

(2) *Line: OLIVER: Please, sir. I want some more.*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: What?*

*OLIVER: Please, sir. I want some more.*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Fetch the beadle!*

(3) *Translation: 对不起，先生，我还想添点*

*-什么？*

*对不起，先生，我还想添点*

*-快把执事叫来*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*OLIVER: Sorry, sir, I still want some more.*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: What?*

*OLIVER: Sorry, sir, I still want some more.*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Quickly fetch business manager.*

*Beadle* is a ceremonial officer of a church, college, or similar institution (*OED*). It is usually associated with the concept of the parish, referring to a parish officer. The word *beadle* stems originally from the Greek *διάκονος* (*diakonos*), referring to someone who offers Jesus service and fellowship (Navone 1990, p. 230). Moreover, *beadle* more generally refers to a law clerk specialising in bailiffship<sup>64</sup> (Gould 1967, p. 78). In China, there is no corresponding post relating to an officer who works for the church. This particular religious post is archaically rendered as “执事”/ “business manager” in the Chinese

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<sup>64</sup> “Bailiff” was widely employed as the same post as seneschal whose earliest obligation is to protect churches and abbeys (Fesler 1962, pp. 83-84).

subtitles. The Chinese subtitles thus translate the power of the *beadle* without offering a specific Chinese equivalent in cultural terms. However, in the archaism of the word they gesture to Dickens's era. Such is the archaism of the word *beadle* in English, that comparatively few British viewers might be able to identify its referential content in religious or historical terms. The *beadle's* power is made apparent visually and in the film dialogue for the British viewer. Therefore, the situation of the British and Chinese viewers of this film is comparable. There is cultural translation loss even for the English viewer, who has to process the temporal translation of the word *beadle* while the Chinese audience has to process its linguistic translation.

Example 7 the Legal System (British Monarchy): Her Majesty

(1) *Description of Scene: One master is trying to explain to Oliver what oakum is and how it is used for the ships of Her Majesty's navy.*

(2) *Line: THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Oakum's the fibres you unpick from the old rope.*

*Then it's used again for the ships of Her Majesty's navy.*

(3) *Translation: 麻絮是从旧绳中抽出来的麻线*

*以便女王陛下的舰队重复利用*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Hemp fibre is unpicked from the old ropes*

*so that Empress ruler's fleets can reuse them.*

The term of address in this example, *Her Majesty*, refers specifically to a British queen. China does not have kings and queens like the British royalty. However, it does have a history of emperors. While these figures were traditionally male, one female empress is well-known in Chinese history and culture. Empress Wu Zetian (武则天 624-705), the only female leader to hold imperial power in Chinese history, is recognised as a promoter of Buddhism (Karetzky 2002, p. 113). The subtitles therefore are able to transpose the terms of address used for “武则天” / “Wu Zetian” as they refer to the British queen detailed in Dickens's novel. The subtitles thus use a highly domesticated terminology, “女王陛下” / “Empress ruler” to refer to a ruling concept and form (monarchy) which is foreign to China. Even though the linguistic equivalence is created in the Chinese subtitles by a domestic expression, the origin of this title remains still ostensibly foreign to the target audiences.

Example 8 the Legal System: Magistrate

(1) *Description of Scene: The Magistrate, Mr. Fang, stops the benevolent old man, Mr. Brownlow, who is trying to withdraw the charge of pilfering against Oliver Twist.*

(2) *Line: MR. BROWNLOW: Before I am sworn...*

*...I must beg to say one word.*

*MR. FANG: Hold your tongue, sir.*

*MR. BROWNLOW: I will not, sir!*

*MR. FANG: Hold your tongue this instant.*

*You're an insolent, impertinent fellow.*

*How dare you bully a magistrate?*

(3) *Translation: 在我宣誓前...*

*请容我说句话...*

*-住嘴, 先生*

*-我不, 先生!*

*-给我住嘴!*

*你这个鲁莽无礼的家伙*

*竟敢蔑视本法官*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Before I take an oath...*

*Please allow me to speak...*

*MR. FANG: No speaking, sir.*

*MR. BROWNLOW: I won't, sir!*

*MR. FANG: Stop talking!*

*You are an impertinent and rude fellow.*

*How dare you look down upon me, myself, the judge.*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), *magistrate* stands for a civil officer who administers the law, especially for someone who conducts a court dealing with minor

offences and holding preliminary hearings for more serious cases<sup>65</sup>. The Chinese subtitles offer an explanation of the English term *magistrate* by translating the word as “法官” (“judge”). China has a variety of court structures in its legal system. The highest level of court is the Supreme People’s Court (“最高人民法院”) in Beijing. There are also the local People’s court (“地方人民法院”), the Court of First Instance, for criminal and civil court (“初审法院”, 适用于 “刑事法院”和“民事法院”). These courts incorporate the High People’s Court (“高级人民法院”), the Intermediate People’s Court (“中级人民法院”) and the Basic People’s Court (“基层人民法院”) <sup>66</sup>. However, the Chinese word used to convey *magistrate* in the subtitles refers to none of these Chinese courts. Instead, the Chinese subtitles choose to use a general term for this officer in law. Chinese modifies the word “法官” (“judge”) with an adjective to specify in contemporary Chinese which court states judge presides in. The subtitles choose to avoid this specificity and equivalence, offering in this place a general explanation. If there is translation loss in this subtitle in relation to the legal function, there is also translation gain as the subtitle’s speech patterns offer character analysis. In English, the line of dialogue “How dare you bully a magistrate?” is era and register neutral to a large extent. In contrast, the Chinese subtitle chooses to insert “本” (“myself”), a translation addition which places the character’s dialogue in a formal, archaic style which references for a Chinese audience his clear sense of self-importance and stature.

Example 9 the Legal System: Old Bailey

*(1) Description of Scene: Fagin is threatening Oliver, saying one of his juvenile pickpockets who escaped and reported him to the police was hung in the end at the Old Bailey.*

*(2) Line: FAGIN: There was a lad once, just like you, and I was a father to him.*

*He ran away, like you.*

*He indeed went to the police.*

*And can you guess*

<sup>65</sup> As Abraham Goldstein suggests (1987, p. 1173), as long as a magistrate does exactly what the Supreme Court expects and carefully inspects the cases, the post-warrant reviewing court could treat his or her determination on investigating the charges with deference. Otherwise, if the magistrate is not qualified, or does not commit to the judicial post, the reviewing court is entitled to replace him and conduct a thorough investigation (Goldstein 1987, p. 1173).

<sup>66</sup> For further details on the judicial system in China, see *China's Judiciary* (China.org.cn).

*how he ended up?*

*They hanged him...*

*at the Old Bailey.*

(3) Translation: 以前有个孩子也像你一样

我待他如亲子

后来他也像你这样跑去报警

知道他最后落得什么下场吗?

他被吊死在了...

老城法庭

(4) Back Translation: FAGIN: *There was a child like you.*

*I treated him like my son.*

*He went to the police as you did.*

*Do you know how he ended up?*

*He is hanged at...*

*old city legal court.*

In English, the Old Bailey functions as a linguistic shorthand to refer to the specific court house in London. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), the *Old Bailey* is the Central Criminal Court in London, located in an ancient bailey of the London city wall. The present court was built between 1903 and 1906 at the site of Newgate Prison. The *Old Bailey* in the film is depicted as a notably gruesome place and so as the Criminal Courts described in Dickens's other Victorian works such as *Sketches by Boz*, *A Tale of Two City* and *Great Expectations* (Gould 1967, p. 82). Such courts are key to Dickens's nineteenth-century vision as a result of their increasing visibility in British nineteenth-century history (Hay 1980, p. 54). Despite the specificity of the English source in historical and geographical terms, the subtitles offer a descriptive approximation of their source. They render *Old Bailey* as “老城法庭” / “old city legal court”. The subtitles gesture to the historic era but not to geographical place. The subtitled film communicates through a combination of several sign systems. With the assistance of visual and auditory elements, the place thus remains recognisably visible and horrible as a court. The scene may not show the *Old Bailey* itself but its clear geographical setting in London pictures for the

viewers the London context which in this instance the Chinese subtitles do not need to speak.

Interestingly, when translating the appellation of an officer and a member of the royal family, the subtitles make alternations and domesticate the term of address into a more archaic Chinese equivalence. In relation to key legal figures, the subtitles offer general non-specific equivalence for the word *magistrate*. The translation of the key historical landmark of the *Old Bailey* is not an institution that can cross national boundaries as its cultural overtones are not transferrable even by means of explication.

#### 4.5.3.2. Names

According to Liu (2008, p.42), a clear attempt can also be seen to replicate the naming system from the two key Chinese translated versions of the novel *Oliver Twist* by Rude Rong (1984) and Wenan He (1998) to the film subtitles. Therefore, the subtitling process of naming system in *Oliver Twist* is actively engaged with that of the written translation. This section is based on the written translation concerning naming system ranging from character's names and territorial names that will be contextualised in the Chinese subtitling process and analyses the way in which these names are subtitled for a contemporary Chinese audience by using complicated translation strategies such as archaisation, modernisation and the incorporation of them.

##### 4.5.3.2.1. Characters' Names

Example 10 Characters' Name: Mr. Sowerberry

(1) *Description of Scene: Mr. Sowerberry has just measured the dead women and is going to make coffins for them.*

(2) *Line: MR. SOWERBERRY: I've just taken the measure of the two women that died last night.*

*MR. BUMBLE: You'll make your fortune, Mr. Sowerberry.*

(3) *Translation: 我刚给昨晚死的*

*那两个女人量好了棺材尺寸*

*-你真是“钱”途无量啊, 苏贝利先生*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MR. SOWERBERRY: I just measured the two women who died last night in order to confirm the sizes of their coffins.*

*MR. BUMBLE: You are truly "money" journey immeasurable, Mr. Subeili.*

In the film/novel, the magistrate intends to sign the indentures to make Oliver Mr. Sowerberry's apprentice. Prior to this, the beadle unjustly beats Oliver for his fight against Noah who intentionally mocks his mother. It is obvious that Charles Dickens defines different characters in relation to their ethnic or religious identity. Intriguingly, this scene critically and sarcastically emphasises the unchristian behaviour of the Christian (Meyer 2005, p. 243). Dickens's biting criticism lies in depicting human greed and lack in charity as unchristian acts whilst in reality people self-righteously pride themselves on their own benevolence in nineteenth-century England (Meyer 2005, p. 243). It is important to note that Dickens, in his choice of character names, offers personal comment on the values of those characters. Names offer specific translation challenges to the subtitler, particularly given Dickens's specific use of them to offer insights into his fictional creations. It is important to underline the negative connotation of the name *Sowerberry*. Dickens phonetically plants the word "sower" in the mind of the viewer. *Sower* does have a meaning in English, referring to "one who sows seeds" (*OED*). Its verb "to sow" means "to scatter or place a seed of crop in a field" (*OED*). The example underlines that the Chinese subtitles translate in association with the visual of the film which itself offers key meaning to the viewer. However, this positive meaning is lost in two ways in Dickens's text. It is firstly lost to the contemporary British viewer of the film for whom the noun *sower* is not in frequent contemporary use. It is lost at the second level in Dickens's fiction for the character whose name indicates growth, the fertility of crops and life actually is associated with death and disintegration. Instead of burying crops, Mr. Sowerberry buries corpses. Dickens's play on the meanings of this name are entirely lost in the Chinese subtitles which choose to transliterate *Sowerberry* into "苏贝利" ("Subeili") without mentioning any cultural overtones as discussed. English-Chinese transliteration merely performs in accordance with pronunciation (Wan and Verspoor 1998, p. 1352). The approximations to the original pronunciation remains yet the semantic equivalence is lost entirely.

Example 11 Characters' Name: Bumble



(1) *Description of Scene: Mr. Bumble introduces Oliver to Mr. Sowerberry, and is ready to hand over Oliver to him.*

(2) *Line: MR. SOWERBERRY: Is that you, Bumble?*

*MR.BUMBLE: No one else, Mr. Sowerberry.*

(3) *Translation: 是你吗, 邦布?*

*-正是, 苏贝利先生*

(4) *Back Translation: MR. SOWERBERRY: Is that you, Bangbu?*

*MR.BUMBLE: Exactly, Mr. Subeili.*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), *bumble* refers to “official pomposity and fussy stupidity”, and may mean move or act in an awkward or confused manner. This expressive word has many occurrences in British cultural history. Shakespeare created the word “bumbailiff”, blending “bum” and “bailiff” to refer to the police (Jespersen 1929, p. 92). The word “bumbledom” means official ineptitude and appeared in 1856 as an epithet for British members of Parliament (Abel 2013, p. 76). Dickens used the term to name his beadle (Jespersen 1929, p. 92), reminding readers of the beadle’s sense of self-importance (Abel 2013, p. 75) that epitomises low level of skill and high sense of self-worth (Dickens 1966, p. 7; *Twist* 1838, p. 6). However, the subtitles ignore the historical development of the word *bumble* and adopt transliteration into Chinese. In terms of phonetics, this act of transliteration produces a name which is audibly foreign as the phonological unit *bumble* becomes the Chinese phonological unit “邦布”/ “Bangbu”. This Chinese transliteration of *bumble*’s name makes no sense in Chinese other than to signify the foreignness of the person to whom it is attached. However, in its non-sensicalness, it might be seen to echo the very non-sensicalness of the character, albeit entirely unintentionally for the transliteration of names is part of the subtitling norms (Even-Zohar 1981, p. 6) which characterise the Chinese film industry.

Example 12 Characters’ Name: Artful Dodger

(1) *Description of Scene: Oliver encounters a young stranger on the road.*

(2) *Line: JACK: Oh, by the by...*

*...my name is Jack Dawkins,  
better known as the Artful Dodger.*

(3) Translation: 对了…

我叫唐杰克，绰号“机灵鬼”

(4) Back Translation: JACK: By the way…

my name is Tangjieke, nicknamed “clever ghost”.

The following example extends our analysis of personal names in subtitled form to the realm of nicknames. The *Artful Dodger*, a juvenile criminal, is associated with cunning and subterfuge (Herzfeld 2004, p. 1). Such cunning and subterfuge is encoded in his very name<sup>67</sup>. The *Artful Dodger* is transformed into a Chinese set phrase “机灵鬼”, which can be back translated as “clever ghost”. The “鬼”/ “ghost” under discussion here is not a haunting phantom, but the Chinese way of expressing something or somebody with a particular trait, for instance an adorable personality (Nemoto 2006, p. 29). This explicating strategy offers the Chinese audience an approachable discourse while maintaining elements of semantic transfer. The semantic of *Artful Dodger* is modernised in the subtitles while in the original dialogue the name seems to be from an older era because “dodger” is an early use of word meaning “one who practises artful shifts” (OED). The Chinese subtitles thus operate within a register of endearment. They arguably echo key overtones of the original character’s name which, in English emphasises the character’s skill and dexterity (*Artful*) before implying that he sits on the wrong side of the law (*Dodger*).

**Example 13 Characters’ Name: Bullseye**

(1) Description of Scene: After being reported to the police for child maltreatment, Bill takes his dog Bullseye back to Fagin’s den.

(2) Line: BILL: Bullseye.

Don't you hear me when I whistle?

You (sic) gone deaf or something?

(3) Translation: 大牛

没听到我口哨吗?

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<sup>67</sup> The early nineteenth century marked the beginning of separate trials for juvenile crime (May 2014), and from the 1830s onwards, young people who committed crimes were punished by being imprisoned or transported (May 2014). As we can see in the film, children were still being hanged for theft. The *Artful Dodger* thus is a character who clearly represents a core contemporary social phenomenon for Dickens.

你聋了吗？

(4) Back Translation: BILL: Big cattle.

*Don't you hear me when I am whistling?*

*Are you deaf?*

*Bullseye* or *Bull's Eye* has rich cultural overtones and refers in particular to a kind of game. First of all, it is the centre of a target in the sports of archery, shooting and darts. Whoever hits the centre of the target is the winner (*OED*). It also refers to success in a particular pursuit (Sharp et al. 2010, p. 1576). Historically, when hunters attempted to kill a large beast, they would aim for its eyes, shooting a single arrow into the animal's brain (Sharp et al. 2010, p. 1576). In the game of archery, people paint an eye of a bull on the cut tree trunk as a target (Sharp et al. 2010, p. 1576).

Given the multiple cultural overtones of this word, the translation approaches in relation to it are complicated. First of all, *bullseye* in the filmic line refers to Bill's dog, and not directly to a game. The word *bullseye* as such does not exist in Chinese. In Chinese, the centre of a target be it in archery or shooting is referred to as “靶子” / “target”. Intriguingly, the subtitles retain an animal focus. However, while a *bull* is resolutely male in English, the Chinese subtitles offer a gender neutral animal by translating *bull* as “牛” / (“cattle”). Chinese does have a word for *bull* (“公牛” / “ox”) but the subtitles choose not to use it. The subtitles thus lose the multiple cultural overtones of the source name, replacing them only with comparable, albeit gender different, animal imagery. It is worth pointing out however that the “牛” / (“cattle”) in China has profound symbolic meaning which shapes the viewer's perception of the dog. If in English the name *bullseye* implies the dog's success and flair, in Chinese the “牛” / (“cattle”) is a symbol of diligence and hard work, drawing the plough day and night (Chu 2009, p. 128). In both Chinese and English, the dog's name carries an implied cultural meaning but the meaning is different in each language.

In relation to characters' names, transliteration is frequently employed to transfer the sound of the original names for the receiving culture via the Chinese subtitles. This process of transliteration though is far from straightforward in terms of core meaning. While at one level there is clear translation loss as referential meanings disappear, other, often

intended meanings are generated, precisely in the non-sensical nature of the words created. Indeed, it is from the foreignness and strangeness of these phonetic constructs that meaning may be gleaned. Contrastingly, in relation to another character's name, *Bullseye*, the subtitles explicate the cultural reference in their choice of vocabulary and own cultural image. What follows is related to the translation of territorial names.

#### 4.5.3.2.2. Territorial Names

##### Example 14 Place Name: Pentonville

(1) *Description of Scene: The benevolent old gentleman, Mr. Brownlow, takes Oliver home for better care.*

(2) *Line: MR. BROWNLOW: Call a coach, pray.*

.....

*OFFICER: Got one, sir.*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Thank you, officer.*

*OFFICER: Where to, sir?*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Pentonville.*

(3) *Translation: 请帮我叫辆车*

.....

-车来了

-谢谢你, 警官

-去哪里, 先生?

-潘顿维尔

(4) *Back Translation:*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Please help me to call a car.*

.....

*OFFICER: Here is the car.*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Thank you, officer.*

*OFFICER: Where to, sir?*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Pandunwei'er.*

*Pentonville* is a real place with long history in the British context. Interestingly, *Pentonville* has overwhelmingly negative connotations in English as it was the place in which the British separate-system prison was first implemented in 1842 (May 2014). During the time *Oliver Twist* was serialised, *Pentonville* was apparently an upper-class area. The negative connotations are therefore posterior and not part of Dickens's textual strategy. *Pentonville* though is not possible a prison for Oliver, rather it represents freedom and comes to be a sort of paradise as he even boasts "I slept in a proper bed in my own room" to refer to it (Hanwood 2005, p. 27). Only here does Oliver find peace to breathe, only here does he know kindness and civility, beyond here is viciousness (Frederick 1966, p. 466). As Graham Greene underlined, except for the quiet and shady street in *Pentonville*, all places in London are unsafe for Oliver (Frederick, 1966: 466, cited in Graham, 1952: 56<sup>68</sup>). In 1842, after Charles Dickens's visit to Philadelphia and its Solitary Prison, he realised that new development in penal reform was solitary confinement. He observed that the prisoners were confined to separate cells and were denied all human contact except for sporadic visits. Such punishment was cruel and inhumane and Dickens struggled to popularise a reformatory method in prison. He also explored ways in which care for the destitute is evoked and sought reforms via his novels (Frederick 1966, p. 466). *Pentonville* in Dickens's world holds a complex cultural history in its syllables, the Chinese subtitles merely transliterate this name into "潘顿维尔" ("Pandunwei'er") with no reference to the above sophisticated historical overtones.

Example 15 Place Name: Spitalfields

(1) *Description of Scene: Nancy meets with Mr. Brownlow on London Bridge. She secretly gives information concerning Oliver Twist to the old gentleman to help him.*

(2) *Line: NANCY: Fagin, he has the boy.*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Fagin.*

*NANCY: Find Fagin, you'll find the boy.*

*MR. BROWNLOW: Where is he?*

*NANCY: Spitalfields.*

(3) *Translation: 叫费根, 孩子在他手上*

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<sup>68</sup> Cited from Greene, Graham. 1951. *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*. Eyre & Spottiswoode.

-费根?

-找到他就能找到孩子

-他在哪?

-史毕塔

(4) Back Translation: NANCY: His name is Feigen, he has the boy.

MR. BROWNLOW: Feigen?

NANCY: Find him you will find the boy.

MR. BROWNLOW: Where is he?

NANCY: Shibi tower.

*Spitalfields* or *Spitalfield* is a former parish in the borough of Tower Hamlets. In the Victorian era, this merchant area had degenerated into packed slums. *Spitalfields* was “a prime example of London’s shifting culinary landscape” in the seventeenth century (Kelly 2014) and later became a word which represented urban deprivation after the 1820s (Kershen 2004, p. 262). Oliver’s presence in *Spitalfields* therefore speaks volumes to British viewers.

This is the place where Fagin set his theft lair to avoid suspicion (Twist 2006). As happened in the previous example, the subtitles transliterate the pronunciation of the foreign territorial name. Such a strategy is purely based on phonetic equivalency (Wan and Verspoor 1998, pp. 1352-1353). The historical and cultural overtones regarding the area and Oliver’s living environment vanish in the subtitles. However, the subtitles foreignise the pronunciation of the territorial name, also adding an explanation “塔”/ “tower”. The addition of the word “塔”/ “tower” makes no sense in the visual landscape of the film. However, it may be the product of the subtitler’s modern knowledge of the area as *Spitalfields* is part of the borough of Tower Hamlets, a borough named for its proximity to the Tower of London. This combined strategy of transliteration and explication reflects Loh Dian-yang’s proposed translation strategy of “Transliteration plus Semantic Translation” (Zhang and Pan 2009, pp. 355-356). He argues that when things of foreign origin are rendered, transliteration is first employed to provide the phonetically appropriate but nonsensical equivalent and subsequently semantic translation is added to make the translated noun meaningful in Chinese (Zhang and Pan 2009, pp. 355-356).

While the foreign concept of place name is maintained by means of transliteration, its functional equivalence is further enhanced by explication.

As explored, this section reveals common strategies in the Chinese subtitling of territorial names. The treatment of the Chinese subtitles reveals that transliteration is the key strategy to convey place names to audiences by producing the phonetic equivalence. However, the subtitles tend to lose the cultural and historical overtones of the original references in terms of both personal and territorial names. Despite that, in their nonsensical translation, they nevertheless translate and give meaning to the foreignness of their source. In places, they also offer minor explications which reflect perhaps a certain knowledge of the contemporary urban geography of London that the translator has.

#### 4.5.3.3. Currency

Nations and cultures are characterised not only by their place names and personal names, so too does their currency speak volumes about them. Currency can enable the viewer to trace cultural and temporal origins to a country.

#### Example 16 Currency: Pound<sup>69</sup>

(1) *Description of Scene: Mr. Gamfield is reading a poster that offers five pounds when a boy is taken on.*

(2) *Line: MR. GAMFIELD: "Health—healthy...*

*appren—apprentice.*

*Five pounds."*

*Five pounds and a b—"*

(3) *Translation: “收养健康的…*

*小…学徒*

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<sup>69</sup> For an exploration of the history of British currency, see Rey, Helene. 2001. International Trade and Currency Exchange. *The Review of Economic Studies* 68(2), pp. 443-464. In the early 1800s, the internationalisation of sterling began to take effect on a world stage and continued for more than a century (Rey 2001, p. 443). The industrial revolution strengthened Britain's leading role as the world's richest economy. The Second World War brought the decline of the sterling, consequently sterling pound was replaced by dollar as the leading international currency (Rey 2001, p. 443). Later, the imperial system of pounds, shillings and pence (1 pound traditionally equals to 20 shillings; 1 shilling equals to 20 pence) was replaced by a decimal system in 1971. Thereby coins also altered their appearance in current usage (Snowden et al. 1996, p. 1116).

补助五英镑”

(4) Back Translation: MR. GAMFIELD: “If take on a healthy...

*little...apprentice*

*five English bang is offered”.*

The subtitles contain a combination of translation strategies. At the level of phonetics, the subtitles clearly adopt transliteration to reproduce the original pronunciation of *pound* as “镑”/ “bang”. Moreover, it is essential to note that this transliteration of currency is common and represents the usual way to refer to British currency in contemporary Chinese. Furthermore, amplification and explanation are added by the insertion of the character “英”/ “English” to remind the audience of the film’s cultural setting. Specifically, the Chinese character clearly labels the noun as currency by inserting the lexical unit “币”<sup>70</sup> on the left. In this way, the spectator comprehends that “pound” is related to money based on the Chinese graphological unit “币” (Mehrotra 2008, p. 37).

The reader/viewer has at his/her disposal explanation and transliteration (Chen 2010b, p. 483). Other strategies are seen in relation to other currencies. The American dollar, for example, is translated as “美元” (“American yuan”). While like the translation of pounds, a nation is inserted “美”/“American”, the currency itself is not transliterated. Instead, the word “元”/ “yuan” is used. “Yuan” is one of the currency units in the Chinese monetary system. In contrast to this combined strategy, the following example chooses pure transliteration, paradoxically finding meaning in its clearly very foreign nonsensical nature.

Example 17 Currency: Ha’penny

(1) Description of Scene: Oliver is forced to remove his decent suit given by the kind gentleman Mr. Brownlow.

(2) Line: FAGIN: Dodger, Charley,

*put Oliver to bed.*

*CHARLEY: Best to take them clothes off.*

*They’re too good to sleep in.*

---

<sup>70</sup> For instance, another Chinese character “钱”/ “money” with the lexical unit “币” on the left directly relates to money.



JACK: Charley's right. This here suit

cost more than 4 pence ha'penny.

(3) Translation: 机灵鬼，查理，带奥利弗上床

-先把他衣服脱掉

让他穿着睡太糟蹋了

-查理说得对

这套衣服要四个半便士呢

(4) Back Translation: FAGIN: Clever ghost, Chali, put Aolifu to bed.

CHARLEY: First take off his clothes.

It is too good to sleep in.

JACK: Chali is right.

This set of clothes is worth four and a half bianshi.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines the *penny* as a British bronze coin and the smallest monetary unit equal to one hundredth of a pound. The line also mentions the archaic and colloquial expression *ha'penny*. This low value coin, the half-penny, was only in circulation in the UK until 1971 (Mushin 1998, p. 254). However, the colloquialism and history are not maintained in the subtitles when only the phonetic equivalence is rendered as “便士”/ “bianshi” in Chinese. Unlike Graves' preference for domesticating foreign currency to make his translation fluent to the contemporary English readers (Venuti 1986, p. 29), the Chinese subtitles in this particular example foreignise the monetary system in terms of phonetics to manifest the foreignness of the source text. The British audience would realise a cultural and temporal distance as *ha'penny* no longer circulates in Britain while Chinese audience is completely unaware of the cultural and temporal dimensions of foreignness.

Continuingly, in this vein, the subtitles of the next example *shilling*, read strangely as a result of their foreignising transliteration. The subtitles situate the word in a foreign and unknown world, a world essential to this piece of historical drama which is foreign in temporal terms even to its British viewers. It is also resolutely situated in a foreign and unknown world, a world comforting in its Britishness.

Example 18 Currency: Shilling

(1) *Description of Scene: Fagin rewards Oliver with a shilling for his cleverness as a pickpocket.*

(2) *Line: FAGIN: You're a clever boy, my dear.*

*I never saw a sharper lad.*

*Here's a shilling for you.*

(3) *Translation: 你是个聪明的孩子，乖乖*

*我从没见过像你这么醒目的*

*赏你一先令*

(4) *Back Translation: FAGIN: You are a clever boy, the well-behaved.*

*I have never seen someone as clever as you.*

*This is one xianling for you.*

*Shilling* is a British coin and monetary unit equal to one twentieth of a pound or twelve pence. It is a unit of currency which is no longer in use (*OED*). The concept of British money and the notion of the *shilling* has been foreignised for the Chinese culture by transliterating its phonetics as “先令” / “xianling”. The foreign nature is clearly maintained in the subtitles with its nonsensical meaning. Interestingly, while the Chinese subtitles' treatment of transliteration creates a word which is foreign for the reader/ viewer in cultural terms, the word *shilling* in the English original is a word which indicates historical distance because of its disappearance of current use. The effect of foreignness is similar, but the context of that foreignness is very different.

In subtitling British currencies, different approaches are visible. In keeping with contemporary usage, *pound* is transliterated, explained geographically and marked with a symbol of currency. *Ha'penny* and *shilling* are transliterated into words which are resolutely foreign for the Chinese audience, words often explained visually by the scenes in which they occur. However, there is an essential foreignness to these currencies for the British audience, an audience who no longer and perhaps has never used these coins.

#### 4.5.3.4. Drink and Food

Example 19 Drink: Gin

(1) *Description of Scene: For the first time Oliver meets Fagin. Fagin welcomes Oliver, offering him gin to warm himself.*

(2) *Line: FAGIN: Now then, Oliver,  
what you must have...  
is a hot gin and water.  
Warms the cockles.*

(3) *Translation: 好了， 奥利弗， 现在来一杯...  
杜松子酒兑水， 暖暖身子*

(4) *Back Translation: FAGIN: Okay, Aolifu, now have a glass of..*

*Dusongzi wine mixes with water, warm yourself.*

Alcohol abuse is obvious throughout the novel/film, denoting the widespread problem in Victorian Britain (Brennan 2001, p. 505). In the Victorian era, public concerns focused on excessive alcohol consumption and the night-time anxiety about public disorder (Measham and Brain 2005, p. 263). Historically, *gin* consumption was associated with social darkness in eighteenth-century England. The link between drink, drunkenness and disorder haunts people in the Victorian era (Measham and Brain 2005, p. 263). In the film, the first time Fagin meets Oliver, he offers Oliver, a free drink, gin and water (Dickens 1966, p. 76). *Gin* is an interesting substance to translate into Chinese culture as it is prevalent in the novel/film. *Gin*, an abbreviation of “genever”, is an alcoholic spirit distilled from grain or malt and flavoured with juniper berries (*OED*). British viewers might not be generally aware of the ingredients of the drink. In a manner slightly different from above, the two-step translation (transliteration and explication) of territorial names, in this instance the subtitles explain the key ingredients of the drink, juniper berries, as “杜松子”/ “Dusongzi” and then add “酒” / “wine”, the generic character for alcoholic drinks in China. The subtitles offer the viewer background details to approximate the drink to Chinese drinking culture that go beyond what the original dialogue line offers. It is worth pointing out that Chinese drinking culture is starkly different from that depicted in Dickens’s novel. In China, the drinking culture is mainly known for its humanistic dimension as an expression of kindness and respect for others (Jiang 2011, p. 252)<sup>71</sup>. Liu

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<sup>71</sup> Some people abuse the drinking culture, the Chinese government is trying to stop this corruption (Branigan 2011).

Fang and Murphy Jamie (2007, p. 100) also explain that the drinking culture is of importance in business etiquette in Chinese culture. The West holds a different understanding of the drinking culture mainly in appreciation of the wine itself (Jiang 2011, p. 251). Therefore, the choice of explication to translate *gin* to the Chinese drinking wine culture is appropriate as it reaches the readers' comprehension in terms of the core ingredients and functional equivalence. The following examples relating to food culture in Britain employ comparable strategies of explication. They are worth mentioning as one of the food products is archaic and one is still in modern usage.

**Example 20 Food: Gruel**

(1) *Description of Scene: Mr. Bumble attributes Oliver's misbehaviour to the fact that he is overfed.*

(2) *Line: MR. BUMBLE: You've overfed him.*

*If you'd kept this boy on gruel,  
this would never have happened.*

(3) *Translation: 你给他吃得太多了*

*如果喂他稀粥的话  
就不会这样*

(4) *Back Translation: MR. BUMBLE: You have overfed him.*

*If you feed him thin porridge.  
this would never have happened.*

*Gruel* occurs frequently in the film. It appears notably in the scene where Oliver asks for more food in the workhouse (Miller 2011, p. 465). The horrific conditions<sup>72</sup> in which paupers live in the workhouse are cruelly mentioned by Dickens (Sathyagirinathan 1943, p. 126). *Gruel* is a word which is no longer in current use in English. It represents an archaic and unappealing food stuff (thin porridge) fed to the poor and sick. In Chinese, it becomes “稀粥” (“thin porridge”) made with rice which is a common breakfast for the Chinese

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<sup>72</sup> Poor people's life expectancy was less than forty years of age suffering oppression under the Settlement Law (Sathyagirinathan 1943, p. 118).

people. Though the boys' cruel living conditions in the workhouse are completely lost in the subtitles, the translation fits modern Chinese eating habits.

Example 21 Food: Bacon

(1) *Description of Scene: The servant Charlotte has just saved some bacon for Noah, another apprentice to Mr. Sowerberry.*

(2) *Line: CHARLOTTE: Saved a nice little bit of bacon for you  
from the master's breakfast*

(3) *Translation: 我从老板的早餐里  
留了点熏肉给你*

(4) *Back Translation: CHARLOTTE: I saved a little smoked meat for you  
from my boss's breakfast.*

*Bacon* refers to cured meat from the back or sides of a pig (*OED*). *Bacon* serves as a common British breakfast throughout history (Hollows 2003, p. 235). However, the subtitles render the culture-specific term *bacon* as “熏肉” / “smoked meat”, maintaining the British culinary method – explicating the cooking process of making bacon. On the whole, the translation strategy tends to explain the British way of making bacon without specifying the animal from which it comes just as it explains the ingredients of making *gin*. Both *bacon* and *gin* clearly demonstrate the subtitles' intention to explain the cooking culture of the source film dialogue rather than simply transliterating them. Another translated form of *bacon* does exist, “培根” / “pei gen” in Chinese. However, the film chooses not to use direct transliteration which ultimately results in a nonsensical artefact for the Chinese viewer.

What the subtitles have underlined in relation to drink and food in *Oliver Twist* is that explication is frequently used to render British food culture for Chinese audiences. The temporal foreignness of the source film regarding *gruel* is lost as the food product is translated and explained as a modern Chinese breakfast.

#### 4.5.3.5. Games

If cultures and nations are often characterised by distinct food products and consumptional patterns, so too are they characterised by patterns of their games and plays. One core example from Dickens's source text will be explored in this context.

##### Example 22 Game: Spec or Speculation

(1) *Description of Scene: Nancy is teaching Oliver how to play the game of "Spec or Speculation".*

(2) *Line: NANCY: It's called Spec or Speculation.*

*Three cards each, and then the one he turns up...  
is trumps.*

(3) *Translation: 这叫“偷鸡”*

*每人三张牌，谁拿到那张...  
谁就是赢家*

(4) *Back Translation: NANCY: This is called "stealing hen".*

*Each person has three cards, and whoever gets that one...  
is the winner.*

*Spec or Speculation*, a British card game, is mentioned in both Jane Austen's and Charles Dickens's novels (Parlett 2014). The English word *Speculation* is comparatively neutral and merely referring to "A round game of cards, the chief feature of which is the buying and selling of trump cards, the player who possesses the highest trump in a round wins" (*OED*). However, it is rendered in the Chinese subtitles with the much more cultural equivalent Chinese character, "偷鸡"/ "stealing hen". The Chinese here is derived from an idiom "偷鸡不成蚀把米", meaning "to try to steal a chicken only to end up losing the rice used to lure it" (Hornby et al. 1970). The English term *Speculation* refers to investment in stocks or property in the hope of gain but with the risk of loss. The Chinese imagery works in a different direction from the English source. The English card name leads with the possibility of gain. The Chinese subtitles, via the idiom, underline the inevitability of loss. The Chinese subtitles may domesticate the imagery of the original but, in their word choice, they offer a different moral reading of the game. To summarise, in relation to the

subtitling of games in *Oliver Twist*, the subtitling of *Spec* or *Speculation* adopts a domesticating approach which implicitly carries an altered moral meaning.

#### 4.5.4. Elements of the Victorian Era

There are inevitable challenges associated with the subtitling of a film set in an earlier era. Lawrence Venuti (1986, pp. 20-21) writes about foreignisation and domestication in terms of geographical space and cultures. Interestingly, his theories of foreignisation and domestication are powerful in relation to the temporal transfer in the subtitling process of *Oliver Twist*. The subtitlers of this film face a choice. They may either domesticate and update Dickens's Victorian era for modern comprehension or they leave it archaic and foreign in temporal terms.

##### 4.5.4.1. Daily Languages

###### Example 23 Daily Languages: Cove

(1) *Description of Scene: The Artful Dodger tempts Oliver to steal.*

(2) *Line: JACK: If you don't take pocket handkerchiefs*

*and watches, Nolly...*

*...some other cove will. You have*

*the same right to them as they have.*

(3) *Translation: 就算你不去偷那些手绢和怀表...*

*别人也会去偷*

*所谓肥水不流外人田*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*JACK: Even though you do not steal these hand-spun silk and pocket watch.*

*Other people may steal*

*as people would not let one's own fertile water flow into others' field.*

As the criminal underworld was prevalent in London in Dickens's time (Shore 1999, p. 10), police were not reliable and were not considered to be the representatives of law and justice, they were unable to deal with criminal activities (Shore 1999, p. 11). *Cove* taps into the criminal activity in the era and its Victorian vocabulary. The archaic choice of language, *cove* appears in the source film but the subtitles explicate and update the term.

Cove in the Victorian period means boys or men who made their living from stealing and other dishonest activities (Shore 1999, p. 15). The subtitles explicate with a descriptive expression, “别人” / “other people”, the original archaic language and historical culture regarding thieves in London’s nineteenth century are lost. However, the subtitles displace the archaism of the source onto a different section of the sentence. They render “You have the same right to them as they have...” with an idiom in Chinese as “肥水不流外人田”<sup>73</sup> / “not letting one’s own fertile water flow into others’ field” (*C-E Dictionary*). This phrase stands out rhetorically and structurally. There is a humorous gain in the Chinese subtitles when a street lad like Jack uses this slang term to persuade Oliver to steal. The original line’s formal tone (“You have the same right to them as they have”) becomes a slang term in Chinese. In the Chinese subtitles, Jack’s persuasion is embedded with wisdom which is not present in the original dialogue.

Example 24 Archaic Languages: *Physic*

(1) *Description of Scene: Nancy is taking care of Bill who is badly injured.*

(2) *Line: BILL: I’m burning up.*

*Give me me (sic) physic.*

*Where’s me physic?*

(3) *Translation: 我烫死了*

*给我来点药，我的药呢？*

(4) *Back Translation: BILL: I am burning up.*

*Give me some medicine, where is my medicine?*

*Physic* is archaic language involving medical drugs and the art of healing (*OED*). This word links to the important role played by medicine in Dickens’s novels, where he not only described syndromes, but promoted the treatment of children. Above all, he brought up the topic of the humanity of the destitute. Dickens wanted to move those who had great impact in British society to care for the less fortunate (Kryger 2012, p. 337). The subtitles do not convey the archaic form and historical background of *physic* and merely replace it with a linguistic modern equivalence as “药” / “medicine”. Moreover, in the film dialogue

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<sup>73</sup> For More details on this proverb, see *Linguee Dictionary*, 2017.



the character speech is grammatically incorrect as it uses “me” for “my”, underlining the character’s lack of education and social gloss. In stark contrast to this meaningful grammatical mistake which reveals much about the character, the Chinese subtitles flow fluently and correctly in grammatical terms. In terms of language, they are more accurate than their source. The original dialogue indicates that Bill is seriously ill when speaking weakly and shakily. There is a loss of meaning in the Chinese subtitles as they translate accurately in linguistic terms while they are not accurate in relation to preserving the meaning communicated by Bill’s voice. The sound track can compensate for this loss as the tone of voice is audible to the Chinese audience. In an attempt to remind the reader/viewer of the closeness of language to everyday life and especially to emphasise the relevance of today, some translators advocate modernisation of language instead of sending the reader to meet archaism or obsolescence (Kocmanova 1970, p. 27). Though the British viewers of the film may or may not be fully understood the archaic use of *physic*, the context of film and the visual information are likely to compensate for this momentary gap of lexical understanding on part of the audience.

Example 25 Archaic Languages: Foundling

(1) *Description of Scene: Mr. Sowerberry is curious why Oliver, an orphan, has a name. The beadle, Mr. Bumble, says he created the name.*

(2) *Line: MR. SOWERBERRY: Oliver Twist.*

*How comes an orphan to have any name at all?*

*MR. BUMBLE: I invented it.*

.....

*I name all our foundlings in alphabetical order.*

(3) *Translation: 奥利弗·忒斯特*

孤儿怎么也有名字?

--我给起的

我按字母顺序给那些孤儿起名

(4) *Back Translation: MR. SOWERBERRY: Aolifu · Tesite.*

*Why does an orphan have any name at all?*

*MR. BUMBLE: I invented it.*

*I follow the alphabet order to name those orphans.*

*Foundling* means an infant who has been abandoned by its parents and is discovered and cared for by others (*OED*). In the Victorian era, the Foundling Hospital refused to receive the tremendous number of infants needing care. Only infants of single women with previously good character and without paternal support were finally accepted (Sauer 1978, p. 85). The foundling situation in nineteenth-century Britain reflected social, historical and cultural conditions. The subtitles lose all of the above-mentioned social, historical and cultural connotations. They use however a culturally domestic term for *foundling* rendering it as “孤儿” / “orphan”. It was initially translated in the most influential Chinese literary work titled “《赵氏孤儿》” / “Orphan of the Zhao Family” in 1734 (Wanhong 2005, p. 2497). It was also used in the Chinese release title for the translation of *Oliver Twist* / 《雾都孤儿》 which appeared in 1984<sup>74</sup>. In the next example, the English word *handkerchief*, while this word features in this section of archaic language, its interest resides equally in its ability to merge modern meaning with an item of historic significance.

**Example 26: Handkerchief**

(1) *Description of Scene: Fagin is showing Oliver the stolen goods he has.*

(2) *Line: FAGIN: You were staring at the*

*pocket handkerchiefs, eh, my dear?*

(3) *Translation: 这些都是手绢, 亲爱的*

(4) *Back Translation: FAGIN: These are hand-spun silks, my dear?*

Originating from the mid-sixteenth century, *handkerchief* refers to a square of cotton made from finely woven material intended for wiping one's hands, nose and face (*OED*). *Handkerchiefs* are key items for Fagin's gangs of young thieves who steal them from rich people. *Handkerchief* thus represents the main crime young people committed in the nineteenth century (May 2014). Carrying cotton *handkerchiefs* is one of the key status symbols of ladies and gentlemen in nineteenth-century England, connoting the upper-

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<sup>74</sup> The novel *Oliver Twist* was introduced to China decades ago with multiple versions of Chinese translations. One of the most accepted versions is by 荣如德 (Rude Rong). His version was published by “上海译文出版社” / “Shanghai Yiwén Press” in 1984 (Liu 2008, p. 42).

middle class (Prochaska 1977, p. 62). The subtitles reflect the social and cultural status of *handkerchief* by rendering the word as an archaic and traditional expression, “手绢” / “hand-spun silk”. In contrast to the English *handkerchief*, the Chinese subtitles specify both a material (silk) and a quality production process (hand-spun) to echo the historical and cultural origin of this term in Victorian Britain.

In summary, archaisation is frequently adopted when it comes to subtitling archaic languages in *Oliver Twist* as the strategy of temporal equivalence is possible both linguistically and culturally when translating *foundling* and *handkerchief*. The terminology of *cove* and *physic* in contrast maintains merely linguistic equivalence of the original thanks to explication.

#### 4.5.4.2. Working Conditions

##### Example 27 Working Conditions: Hard Labouring and Transportation

(1) *Description of Scene: Goaded by the taunts of Noah, Oliver is roused into action when Noah shouts cruel insults at his dead mother.*

(2) *Line: NOAH: But you must know, workhouse...*

...your mother was  
a regular right-down bad one.  
.....  
...It's a good thing she died  
when she did...  
...or she'd be hard labouring or transported.

(3) *Translation: 但你要知道，救济娃...*

你妈准不是什么好东西  
.....  
她死了也好...  
不然准会做苦役或被流放

(4) *Back Translation: NOAH: But you have to know, the baby from rescue institution...*

Your mum must be a bad thing

.....

*It's good for her to die...*

*Otherwise she must be doing hard servitude or exiled.*

*Hard labour*<sup>75</sup> is defined as “heavy manual work as a punishment” (*OED*). Given that it is no longer a punishment meted out by the British Judicial System, the term is an archaic concept. Penal servitude was abolished for England and Wales in the Criminal Justice Act of 1948 (Killingray 1994, p. 204). In contrast, the People’s Republic of China still uses “劳教” (“Laojiao”), re-education through labour and “劳改” (“Laogai”), reform through labour, as ways to punish prisoners. The subtitles though do not use either of these contemporary Chinese words, choosing instead to use the word “苦役” (“Kuyi”) / “Hard servitude”. The subtitles thus explain the concept but choose a word which does not embed it in a Chinese context. The Chinese subtitles avoid using these available words perhaps for fear that the viewers might link contemporary Chinese practice to a backward era. An era back in 1967-1977 was China’s Cultural Revolution when intellectuals were punished through “劳教” (“Laojiao”) and “劳改” (“Laogai”). Attention must also be paid to the British word *transported*. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the government started to send prisoners to penal colonies, first in America and then in Australia (Moran et al. 2012, p. 449). The word *transported* therefore is a word which is particularly resonant in a nineteenth-century context. It is again an archaic concept now. The concept is not one which applies to the Chinese legal system in historical terms. Therefore, the subtitles again have to explain the term as “流放” / “exile”. While the English dialogue is clearly historically situated in its vocabulary, the Chinese subtitles are more neutral in terms of time and geographic location. It is interesting to note that, in Noah’s contempt for Oliver by calling him “workhouse”, the Chinese subtitles actively maintain this contempt as they render it as “救济娃” / “the baby from rescue institution” in a specific term. If *hard labour* and *transportation* are key features of the nineteenth-century British cultural landscapes, so too is the institution in this next example: *workhouse*.

#### Example 28 Working Conditions: Workhouse

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<sup>75</sup> Oscar Wilde underwent a sentence of two years’ hard labour in 1897, he thus deemed the punishment more than a man could endure and expressed his hope that it would be abolished in the 1898 Prison Act (Bailey 1997, p. 289). Hard labour was thus a key feature of the nineteenth-century crime and punishment.

(1) *Description of Scene: Mr. Bumble takes Oliver to his new master, Mr. Sowerberry.*

(2) *Line: MR. BUMBLE: ...this is the orphan*

*from the workhouse.*

*MRS. SOWERBERRY: Dear me, he's very small.*

*MR. BUMBLE: But he'll grow, Mrs. Sowerberry.*

(3) *Translation: 这个就是救济院的孤儿*

*-天哪, 他可真瘦小*

*-他会长大的, 苏太太*

(4) *Back Translation: MR. BUMBLE: This is the orphan from rescue institute.*

*MRS. SOWERBERRY: Oh, my, he is very thin and small.*

*MR. BUMBLE: He will grow, Mrs. Su.*

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), the *workhouse* is a historical British institution where the destitute of the parish received lodging in return for work. They were harsh places to inhabit. One poor woman once described her experience of staying in a workhouse: "I only wish those who like the law<sup>76</sup> may suffer under it as I have done. I would sooner kill my children and hang myself than go in again to be treated as I have been"<sup>77</sup>. The Chinese subtitles render this term with an archaic and domestic equivalence, "救济院"/ "rescue institution". The "救济院"/ "rescue institution" is also known by people as "同善堂" / "benevolent association". The attempt to make the historical transfer is evident in the subtitles. The "救济院"/ "rescue institution" in China was established early in 1888 for less fortunate people including homeless people, orphans, maltreated prostitutes, the disabled and those who needed care in later life, an education, a weaving job, or just simple labour. This institution in China is regarded as a welfare house for relief (Li 1956). The East and West are markedly different in relation to these two institutions. Employing the strategy of domestication, the subtitles encourage the reader to make a connection between the domestic culture of "救济院"/ "rescue institution" and that of Victorian England. Nida (1964, p. 159) claims that one may use the concept of

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<sup>76</sup> For further details on the New Poor Law of 1834 and the experience of those who lived in the workhouse, see (Ledger 2007, p. 83).

<sup>77</sup> Quoted from *A Letter from a Southern Country Correspondent* to the author, Sally Ledger of the book *Dickens and The Popular Radical Imagination*, dated 2 October 1840.

dynamic equivalence to “relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture”. This subtitle enacts this theory. It should be noted that in this dialogue where a domestic equivalent is chosen for the *workhouse*, the name Sowerberry is also domesticated, despite the fact that the film transliterates it in Example 10. The subtitles render Mrs Sowerberry as “苏太太”/ “Mrs Su”, a common Chinese surname. Contrary to this example, the next one in relation to *oakum picking* employs a contrasting strategy to make the historical link.

Example 29 Working Conditions: Oakum Picking

(1) *Description of Scene: A beadle explains to Oliver what oakum is and how it is used for Her Majesty’s navy.*

(2) *Line: THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Learn from the boy next to you.*

*OLIVER: What am I to learn, sir?*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Learn to pick out the oakum.*

*OLIVER: What’s oakum, sir?*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Stop asking so many questions.*

*Oakum’s the fibres you unpick from the old rope.*

*Then it’s used again for the ships of Her Majesty’s navy.*

(3) *Translation: 跟旁边的孩子学着编*

*-学什么，先生？*

*-学抽麻絮*

*-什么是麻絮，先生？*

*-别老问个没完*

*麻絮是从旧绳中抽出来的麻线*

*以便女王陛下的舰队重复利用*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Learn from the boy next to you to knit.*

*OLIVER: What to learn, sir?*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Learn to pick out hemp fibre.*

*OLIVER: What is hemp fibre, sir?*

*THE WORKHOUSE MASTER: Stop asking questions.*

*Hemp fibre is unpicked from the old ropes  
so that Empress ruler's fleets can reuse them.*

The work of *oakum* picking by unpicking the tightly bound lengths of rope covered in tar was highly demanding and unpleasant (Simmons 2011, p. 3). The English subtitles and indeed the images of the film show the boys unpicking rope for recycling. The Chinese subtitles use a verb which works in the opposite direction, “跟旁边的孩子学着编” / “Learn from the boy next to you to knit”. The verb “to knit”/ “编” implies the creation of something not its unpicking. The word *oakum* is again a word deeply rooted in British nineteenth-century history. It relates to the practice of *oakum picking*, tearing old rope to pieces for the loose fibre used in caulking, and was one of the punishments for English prisoners (Bailey 1997, p. 289). The subtitles explicate the nature of the work as “学抽麻絮”/ “learn to pick out hemp fibre” as the historical reference attached to it is not transferrable. Similarly, the next example in relation to *chimney sweeping* has comparable historical overlap and may not, in the same way, be translated using a historical equivalent.

Example 30 Working Conditions: Chimney Sweeping

(1) *Description of Scene: Oliver escapes from being a chimney sweep for Mr. Gamfield.*

(2) *Line: BOARD OF THE WORKHOUSE: MEMBER A: Chimney sweeping is a nasty trade.*

*BOARD OF THE WORKHOUSE: MEMBER B: Young boys have been smothered  
in chimneys before.*

(3) *Translation: 扫烟囱是个脏累活*

*-童工憋死在里面的事  
也时有所闻*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*BOARD OF THE WORKHOUSE: MEMBER A: Sweeping chimney is a dirty and  
tiring job.*

*BOARD OF THE WORKHOUSE: MEMBER B: It usually happens  
when child labourers have been  
smothered inside.*

According to Mr. Gamfield's description in the novel, young boys are maltreated as child labourers to clean chimneys and to ensure their operation. The boys risk being smothered in this task (Dickens 1966, p. 22). During the 1830s and 1840s, chimney fires frequently happened with an average of 94 cases annually (Cullingford 2001, p. 48). During the Industrial Revolution, apprentices in the chimney sweeping trade were frequently mistreated by their masters (Cullingford 2001, p. 68). Although the 1788 Act achieved better regulation of chimney sweeps, including a proviso that the apprentices should be properly clothed and fed, thoroughly washed and cleaned, it did not come into full effect. This first Chimney Sweeping Act was largely ignored (Cullingford 2001, p. 107). Therefore, chimney sweeping was a cruel difficult profession in the nineteenth century. However, the Chinese subtitles describe the fairly common profession with a neutral term, 扫烟囱 / "Sweeping Chimney", making no historical reference to the original. It is the specific historical context, not the linguistic choice, that marks this profession as particularly hazardous as China lacks in an equivalent historical phenomenon to the original.

To summarise, while there are common themes in the subtitles' translation of these working conditions in early Victorian England in the context of the modern film version *Oliver Twist*, so too are there differences in relation to cultural approach. The subtitles maintain an archaic symmetry via the historical transfer of the historic term *workhouse*, but they make other modern and neutral expressions and mark the professions in relation to *hard labouring*, *oakum picking* as well as *chimney sweeping* in descriptive and approachable contemporary ways via the use of explication. The Chinese subtitles thus underline both archaic and modernised approaches in the subtitling of working conditions in this section.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

Using Hung's (1980) key classifications of recurrent historical features in Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* as well as adding detailed categories (daily languages and working conditions) which characterise the modern heritage film version, this chapter has sought to analyse how the Chinese film industry mediates British history in the subtitling of this historical film for a Chinese audience. The major challenge for the subtitlers lies in the transfer of



the early nineteenth-century Victorian history to modern China, taking the linguistic, cultural and historical barriers into consideration.

From the perspective of the film selection, what the act of subtitling practice has revealed is that the Chinese authorities intentionally used British heritage to develop their own Chinese heritage via the modern film version of *Oliver Twist*. In the time when the film was subtitled and released in 2006 China was experiencing social chaos which resonated with that of Victorian Britain. The film's subject matter resonates with traditional and modern Chinese values such as Confucius' critical thinking and benevolence, President Hu Jintao's aspiration of "Constructing a Harmonious Society", as well as the Chinese themes of reward and punishment, the subtitled film in consequence is used to promote Chinese cultural values for their audiences despite being about nineteenth-century Britain.

There remains though a clear intention to make the historical transfer from Victorian England to modern China in the subtitles via the frequent use of archaic expressions such as four-character idioms and domestic equivalence. As William Morris asserts in his writing, the domestic reader expects more illustration of the source culture in a translation as well as a return to an earlier time. Therefore, Morris suggests that the peculiarities of the archaic languages be deliberately and consciously translated (Bassnett 2013, p. 76). At times, the Chinese subtitlers for *Oliver Twist* take him at his word. However, in other instances, they explicate and update to enable the viewer to make a smooth reading. Moreover, a rich multiplicity of subtitling approaches is found collaboratively in *Oliver Twist* (2005). These are transliteration plus explication to make Christianity meaningful in Chinese; explication and amplification to transfer *Old Bailey* in a Chinese context; transliteration and explication in subtitling both personal and territorial names. While norms with rich cultural and historical overtones often cannot be translated by the Chinese subtitles, it is interesting to note that the ways in which the Chinese subtitles in their frequent acts of collaborative strategies gain multiple meanings of their own. China's own heritage is thus mediated via that of Britain. This subtitling process, shaped as it is by linguistic, cultural and historical constraints, at times creates subtitles which work on multiple levels where transliteration is not only faithful to the sounds of the English origin, but conveys the foreignness of the subject, complemented by approaches such as explication, amplification and domestication. Therefore, the historical

features shown in this modern version of a British heritage film empower the subtitles to interact with Chinese culture to transfer meaning via either archaic historical or modernised expressions for Chinese audiences. Employing a complex combination of translation strategies, this chapter has attempted to shed new light upon the intertextual relationship between early Victorian England and twentieth-first-century China in the Chinese subtitles. These cultural and temporal specificities and complexities are reinterpreted and redirected to the receiving culture for the purpose of rejuvenating its own cultural heritage.

## 5. Subtitling Bridget Jones's Fantasy World: The Transfer of Sexuality and Gender in a Chick Flick

### 5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored how British history is mediated via Chinese history in the practice of subtitling a British heritage film. The aim of this chapter is to focus on the translation of a modern British chick flick, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001). "Chick", according to Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (2010, p. 98), refers to a middle-class, frequently college-educated woman in her twenties to early thirties. The term "chick flick" derives from the parallel term "chick lit" which is a literary genre that characterises women and focuses on their social lives and relationships, and is predominately aimed at female readers who have similar experiences (Davis-Kahl 2008, p. 18). The chick flick genre has boomed since the 1990s (Cook 2006, p. 233) and its "chick culture" features in both the independent sector and mainstream society, underlining women's engagement with culture (Cook 2006, p. 33).

The film *Bridget Jones's Diary* is one of the landmark chick flicks of the 1990s<sup>78</sup> (Luo 2015, p. III). Written by Helen Fielding in 1996, the novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* created a new icon of contemporary femininity in which Bridget's impulsive, independent and foul-mouthed character contradicts the traditional female stereotype (Santaemilia 2008, p. 230). Released in 2001, the film adaptation utilised a female gendered language that constructed a feminine hierarchy through film and framed a wider recognition of gender ideology (Cobb 2011, p. 28). This blockbuster was and is attractive to a broad demographic that brings older and younger women and transnational viewers together. As a result, the film transformation has moved from a narrow domestic fan base to a widespread global audience (York 2010, p. 5). Ashley York (2010, p. 10) argues that the success of the chick flick genre enables a female audience to experience the freedom and independence depicted in the film. In addition, the language used in *Bridget Jones's Diary* contains a series of metaphors which evoke Western cultural expectations in relation to gender identity, including the gendered relationship of marriage and romance (Cobb 2011, p. 29).

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<sup>78</sup> The representatives of chick flick also include *Legally Blonde* (2001), *Sex and the City* (2008) and *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) etc. (Luo 2015, p. III).

When considering this metaphor, it becomes clear that the Chinese subtitlers' activity is not restricted to simple linguistic transfer. Rather, they must engage in ideological translation or intervention for their receiving culture (Cobb 2011, p. 29). Such are the differences in gender ideology between countries that cultural and linguistic transfer between them has always constituted a challenge to the translator (Longo 2009, p. 10).

Specifically, the challenges of subtitling *Bridget Jones's Diary* for a Chinese market lie in the translation of swear words and concepts considered taboo in China as depicted in the film. As Eva Chen (2010a, p. 246) argues, apart from the vulgar languages, the challenges also involve portraying women as socio-economic consumers and sexual beings. Sexuality and gender remain the key challenges of subtitling *Bridget Jones's Diary* for a Chinese context. This chapter will analyse how sexuality and gender are subtitled for a Chinese female audience in this English-language film. Long Yuan (2015) suggests that sexually taboo language is used in the Chinese subtitling of the television series *Sex and the City* (1998), which was released in China before *Bridget Jones's Diary*. There is, therefore, something of a precedent for the film. Sexually taboo words, as Yuan defines them, are "in essence, linguistic items used to express and exemplify the sexual habits and culture within a specific community" (2015, p. 100). In a manner highly relevant to this chapter, he explores how women's identity is portrayed and how significantly the conventional gender boundaries may be transgressed by women's use of sexually taboo words. This chapter will discuss how female gender identity is projected to modern Chinese women in the subtitling practice of this film. The present study of a chick flick, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, not only encompasses the evaluation of the subtitles relating to sexually-loaded words, swearing and offensive language, but also euphemism and humour, and items and activities often associated with women, food products, boyfriends and clothes in British culture. Three research questions are raised to discuss the key issues of sexuality and gender in translation:

- (1) Why did the Chinese authorities select this film to be subtitled?
- (2) What translation strategies have been employed to translate this chick flick?
- (3) How do the subtitles make the transfer of sexuality and feminist ideology to Chinese culture considering the linguistic and cultural constraints in China?

## 5.2. *Bridget Jones's Diary* in the Chinese Context

Long Yuan (2015) represents an entry point for this chapter as he is the first scholar to assess systematically the processes of subtitling sexually explicit female narratives for a Chinese context which has traditionally promoted a different female identity. According to Yuan (2015, p. 66), by showing women using sexual languages that is traditionally considered taboo in the Chinese context, modern Chinese women encourage to talk more openly about their sex lives and sexuality in general. This contradicts with the Confucian idea of becoming a “virtuous wife and good mother” (Yue 2009, p. 568). Moreover, Yuan (2015, p. 189) underlines that when subtitling *Sex and the City* (1998), a translational barrier is established in order to minimise the spread of sexual ideology from the source culture to the Chinese culture. The source text is thus altered or mediated by the subtitles to prevent wholesale sexual transfer to Chinese culture (Yuan 2015, p. 189). The subtitles thus might be seen to be powerful in that they convey the film’s emancipatory source material, but they moderate it as they refrain from using coarse, sexually explicit expressions in Chinese by euphemising and metaphorising the linguistic register of the female characters (Yuan 2015, p. 189). As *Bridget Jones’s Diary* arguably increases the visibility of sex and female choice in a Chinese context, it remains an unusual choice for the Chinese authorities to release and subtitle.

A possible reason for the Chinese authorities to select *Bridget Jones’s Diary* lies in its focus on a female viewer. Film audiences both in the Anglophone world and in China are exposed to a commercial motion picture market dominated by action films, which aim to provide a satisfactory viewing experience to a predominant male audience. There is a clear gap in the market for films which meet the growing socio-economic power of women in China. There are also intriguing parallels between Bridget Jones’s concern about her single status and the phenomenon of late marriage among Chinese single women. In China, unmarried women past what is considered marriageable age (27 years old) are referred to as “剩女”/ “leftover women” (To 2013, p. 2). This phenomenon of professional women marrying later is also found in other affluent Western societies. According to Anthony Giddens (1992) and Ulrich Beck (2002), late marriage empowers women to decide their marital choices in patriarchal societies. Interestingly, it is worth investigating how marital issues are transferred to Chinese culture through the image of women

promoted by the breach of speaking the sexual taboo as shown in the film via the Chinese subtitles of *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

Moreover, the release of *Bridget Jones's Diary* in China might be seen in the context of the Chinese government's endeavours to promote female activities in relation to education, independence and freedom. The Chinese government pays special attention to women's rights such as the right to receive education, the right to have access to social networking, the right to conduct business, the right to control property and the right to choose freely her marriage partner (Li 2007b, p. 8). Dorothy Ko et al.'s (2007, p. 19) call for the promotion of women's dignity and independence has close affinities with the advancement of gender diversity offered by *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The film underlines that modern young women now have more ability to control their lives (McRobbie 2004, p. 265).

Finally, there is an increasing market demand in relation to women as socio-economic consumers and also as sexual beings in modern China. Chinese female writers have produced a substantial number of romantic stories concerning intimate relationships since the 1990s (McDougall 2005, p. 98). Commercial publishers noted the market demand for women's fiction (McDougall 2005, p. 102). The global phenomenon of chick lit generally features young urban women who are in pursuit of independence, freedom and sexual pleasure, a vision traditionally opposed to that of the Chinese patriarchy (Chen 2012, p. 215). There are three key factors that may explain why feminism is portrayed in global chick lit. First of all, women's increased earning ability has enabled them to make their own decisions; secondly, female protagonists increasingly demonstrate their cleverness, confidence and knowledge; lastly, modern women have the leisure time to enjoy consumer experiences and the capacity to assert their sexual independence (Chen 2012, pp. 220-223). It is thus significant that globally chick lit has gained a popular appeal. As a genre, it constructs a female identity that arguably transcends national borders (Chen 2012, p. 223).

The reception of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) in China bears out some of the arguments made above in relation to the Chinese government's decision to release the film. Although the genre is more successful in Europe and America, chick flick does attract a substantial

audience amongst Chinese young people (Luo 2015, p. III). A growing number of chick flicks have been made and subtitled in China to satisfy women's aspiration. They tap into the phenomenon of new Chinese feminism in which young Chinese women are encouraged to take control of their love life and career (Luo 2015, p. III). Amongst the chick flicks made in China, the following stand out: 《杜拉拉升职记》(2010) / "Go Lala GO!", 《失恋 33 天》(2011) / "Love Is Not Blind", 《北京遇上西雅图》(2013) / "Finding Mr. Right", 《我的早更女友》(2014) / "Meet Miss Anxiety", etc. (Luo 2015, p. III). According to Ming-Bao Yue (2009, p. 568), Chinese women have been held to high standards of female chastity from the Qing dynasty to the present. In other words, loyalty and commitment to the family are basic requirements for Chinese women. There is therefore something of a clash between Chinese traditional thought and the rise of chick lit and the chick flick in China. Something of that clash is revealed in the chosen Chinese release title which emphasises Jones's romantic relationship by referring to her single status. The Chinese release title is 《BJ 单身日记》("BJ's Diary of Being Single"). The word "单身" ("single") has clear cultural currency and is, therefore, an appropriate translation choice as it underlines the single status of the heroine and implicitly emphasises the status of being independent in relation to romantic relationships. If the Chinese release title is polite about Jones's single status, twenty-one<sup>79</sup> of the twenty-seven articles written about the film in Chinese by both academics and journalists refer to Bridget Jones in relation to "剩女"/ "leftover women", evaluating them in terms of a more traditional ideology. Yang Li and Qing Liang (2016, p. 92), in contrast, offer a more powerful vision of the film. They argue that the freedom and credibility of female characters and their speech and demeanour to some extent elevate female gender identity in China. The film moreover has directly influenced gender in China. The term "BJ" (acronym of Bridget Jones) has become a synonym for unmarried women in China, representing an open-minded attitude for romantic issues for Chinese young women. Moreover, key expressions in the film now circulate in China in relation to the late marriage phenomenon such as "singleton" (单身族/ "single race") and "smug marrieds"

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<sup>79</sup> The above twenty-one articles regarding the film *Bridget Jones's Diary* and their Chinese translations are available at CNKI databases which store academic journals, papers and official materials in China.

(自鸣得意的已婚者/ “arrogant married person”)<sup>80</sup>. These translational terms thus transcend the national boundaries between Britain and China and underline the cultural significance of the film *Bridget Jones’s Diary*.

### 5.3. Theoretical Framework

The present section attempts to illustrate the theoretical structure of this chapter by focusing on the transfer of sexuality and gender in the Chinese subtitling of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001). Two theories, Ernst-August Gutt’s (1986) “Relevance Theory” in communication and cognition and Anthony Baldry and Paul Thibault’s (2006) “Multimodality” in film text analysis, will form the theoretical framework of this chapter. Forbidden words lie at the heart of the film and their translations concerning sexuality and swearing will be the starting point in the analysis.

“Relevance Theory” in relation to its pragmatic and rhetorical meanings to communicate (Sperber et al. 1986, pp. 2-5) is a controversial part of the functionalist translation movement. It was coined as a concept by Ernst-August Gutt (1989, p. 147) who argued that to be successful, a translation must meet the need of its audience. The translator must thus offer his or her audience communicative clues which enable them to comprehend the source text. According to Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber (1986, p. 163), “relevance theory” includes two intentions: first, the “informative intention” to inform the addressee of a certain set of information; second, the “communicative intention” to communicate explicitly or implicitly a contextual manifestation with the recipient. Therefore, the fulfilment of communication requires not merely the mutual manifestation of the “informative intention”, but a rational interpretation in “communicative intention”

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<sup>80</sup> A selection of the above twenty-one articles available from CNKI in relation to *Bridget Jones’s Diary’s* cultural impact in China are as following:

Xi Huang. 论《BJ 单身日记》中大龄单身女性生存境遇 [On Difficulties and Challenges for Single Women who Pass Marriageable Age From the Perspective of the Film *Bridget Jones’s Diary*]. *时代文学 (上半月)* [*Contemporary Literature (First Half of the Month)*]. 2011. (02):137-138.

Anonymous. BJ《单身日记》——在夹缝中求生存的大女人 [*Bridget Jones’s Diary: The Survival of Single Women who Pass Marriageable Age*]. *电影文学* [*Film Literature*]. 2001. (10):44-45.

Xiangyuan Zui. 大龄单身胖姑娘的幸福生活——重温《BJ 单身日记》系列 [A Happy Life of a Fat Single Girl who Passes Marriageable Age: A Review of the Series of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*]. *家庭影院技术* [*Home Theater*]. 2008. (02):100-101.

Qin Zhu. 《BJ 单身日记》不完美女人的完美生活 《BJ 单身日 II: 理性边缘》 [Imperfect Women’s Perfect Life: *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*]. *电影评介* [*Movie Review*]. 2005. (12):79.



(Wilson and Sperber 1986, p. 196). The comprehension of “communicative intention” is a complicated process involving not only verbal or non-verbal communication but mental representation within the recipient. Ernst-August Gutt (1991, p. 27) argues that the target text needs only be relevant to the target audiences who will naturally modify the contextual assumptions in their communication act:

This requirement that the outcome of an act of communication has to modify some previously held assumptions in order to be found rewarding is an important one; it captures, for example, the intuition that the newness of information alone does not guarantee its appropriateness.

The case study *Bridget Jones’s Diary* has sex-related language and vulgar words at its core. Such language and such words cannot be as explicitly sexual and rude as the original for a Chinese audience. Instead, the translation mediates the degree of explicitness to make it appropriate for the receiving culture. According to Gutt (1989, p. 42), the notion of semantic representations is used to refer to “mental representations that are the output of the language module of the mind”. Linguistic expressions are first dealt with by a component or module of the mind that physically interprets language blocks. This linguistic module is followed by a mental representation that uses pre-existing propositions or assumptions to read the context in question (Gutt 1991, pp. 24-25). This is relevant to this chapter insofar as key film lines expressed linguistically in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* are sexually suggestive and in vulgar style while the Chinese subtitles offer a mental representation intended to either tone down the vulgarity or to mediate the sexuality in Chinese culture.

However, while the language module of the mind focuses on mental representation, “modality” also serves to communicate with the external environment of the communication act (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996, p. 160). According to Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996, p. 160), the notion of “modality” stems from linguistics and is able to convey “the truth value or credibility of (linguistic realised) statements about the world”. Following this, Anthony Baldry and Paul Thibault (2006, p. 210) define “multimodality” as “the diverse ways in which a number of distinct semiotic resource systems are both *codeployed* and *co-contextualised* in the making of a text-specific meaning” (Baldry and Thibault 2006, p. 21). Key to this theory is the understanding of how different semiotic systems such as clothes, music, sound, gesture, movement, posture and

spatial relations, etc. interact to make contextual meaning (Baldry and Thibault 2006, pp. 17-20). Theories of “multimodality” are essential to any study of subtitling and film<sup>81</sup> as the subtitles do not operate in a vacuum. Rather, they are always accompanied by and working in tandem with the visual and auditory elements of the film.

The following case study will consider three situational categories (swearing, sexuality and humour). In order to analyse each specified context of situation that is relevant to the Chinese subtitles of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, a definition of “context of situation” is imperative. According to Bronislaw Malinowski (1923, p. 306), the term “context of situation” is coined with a clear attempt to broaden the scope of context. He proposes that, on the one hand, the conception of context needs to be substantially widened to the situation in which a single word is dependent on its context; on the other hand, the conception of context must “burst the bonds of mere linguistics and be carried over into the analysis of the general conditions under which a language is spoken” (Malinowski 1923, p. 306). In the Chinese subtitling of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, the target culture and the situational conditions of the utterance will be considered as the “context of situation”.

#### 5.4. A Case Analysis: Transfer of Gender, Swearing and Sexuality

In this section, the above theories will be applied to the case study to examine how the Chinese subtitles shape female gender ideology. Three situational categories and one specific category highlighted earlier – items and activities often associated with women, food products, boyfriends and clothes – characterise this chick flick. The three situational categories to be analysed are swearing and offensive language 是, sexual language 是 e, and euphemism and humour. The term “context of situation” will be applied to the analysis, particularly on the sex-related languages in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) and its transfer to the Chinese context.

##### 5.4.1. Swearing and Offensive Languages

According to Timothy Jay and Kristin Janschewitz (2008, p. 271), although female dialogue dominates the chick flick genre, the use of excessive swearing may jeopardise the social

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<sup>81</sup> For more details on how “multimodality” applies to film texts and genres, see Baldry and Thibault (2006, pp. 165-261)

relationship with the audience. Swear words are taboo language which expresses the speaker's emotional state so that the embodied emotion can be conveyed to the listener (Jay and Janschewitz 2008, p. 267). Whether a swear word is or is not appropriate will depend on the context, on the speaker-listener relationship, on the social-physical context and on the particular word usage (Jay and Janschewitz 2008, p. 267). *Bridget Jones's Diary* offers the viewer an intimate glimpse into fictional girls' talk. One of the core assumptions on the Chinese subtitling of films is that it considerably tones down taboo languages instead of adhering to the textual cohesion of the film plot (Lung 1998, pp. 103-105). Whether this is or is not the case in general, it is interesting to note that the actual images of *Bridget Jones's Diary* remain unchanged and the length of the Chinese version of the film is the same as that of the original. The level of offensiveness of the original in relation to language may be mediated by the Chinese subtitles. The film's images have not been altered or mediated. The following theme in relation to swearing will explore how swear words are contextually transferred to the Chinese audience.

**Example 1: Flirtatious Conversation**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget's boss, Daniel Cleaver, is flirting with Bridget at a pub while criticising her potential admirer, Mark Darcy.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: So how do you feel about this whole situation...*

*In Chechnya? Isn't it a nightmare?*

*DANIEL: I couldn't give a fuck, Jones.*

*Now look. How do you know Arsey Darcy?*

*BRIDGET: Apparently, I used to run around naked in his paddling pool.*

*DANIEL: I bet you did, you dirty bitch.*

*BRIDGET: What about you?*

*DANIEL: Same. Yeah.*

(3) *Translation: 你对车臣的局势有什么感想?*

*真可怕*

*-那干我屁事*

*布里吉特 我问你*

*你怎么认识马克?*

-听说以前我爱在他的水池里裸泳

-我就知道你很放荡

-你呢?

-也一样

(4) Back Translation:

*BRIDGET: How do you view the situation in Chechen?*

*Really terrible.*

*DANIEL: It's none of my arse business.*

*Bulijite, I am asking you*

*how do you know Make?*

*BRIDGET: I heard that I used to enjoy swimming naked in his pool.*

*DANIEL: I know you are unrestrained in sexual behaviour.*

*BRIDGET: What about you?*

*DANIEL: The same.*

The original film's dialogue contains clear rude swearing. In contrast, the Chinese subtitles moderate these swear words. Cleaver responds, "I couldn't give a fuck" to Jones's icebreaking question regarding the situation in Chechnya. He redirects the question to ask how she knows "Arsey Darcy" ("Mark Darcy") with his flirtatious comment "you dirty bitch". The Chinese subtitles to "I couldn't give a fuck" remove the sexual vocabulary. Cleaver is using the term "fuck" in a non-sexual context to mean that he does not care about the topic. The Chinese subtitles maintain a bodily image in their translation. But they lessen the level of profanity by referring to the Chinese phrase "屁事" ("arse business").

When it comes to Jones's potential admirer, Mark Darcy, Cleaver hostilely calls him "Arsey Darcy". "Arsey" is a particular word play on the phonetic similarity of "arse" that is derived from his surname Darcy. "Arsey" refers to being "bad-tempered and uncooperative" and also "having an exaggerated opinion of one's own importance" (*OED*). The Chinese subtitles completely omit the profanity contained within the alliterative "Arsey Darcy", though arguably the reference to "arse" is already contained within the aforementioned "那干我屁事" / "It's none of my arse business". The contrast between the subtitled

content and the original contempt is clear. The phrase stands out both linguistically and structurally while the Chinese subtitles eliminate both meanings, merely maintaining his first name, “马克” (“Make”). The effect is totally lost in Chinese only with the rendering of his given name to represent him informally and neutrally.

It is interesting to note the subtitles’ alterations to names. The original dialogue has Cleaver addressing Bridget by her surname “I couldn’t give a fuck, Jones”. His use of her surname without any first name or title is an indicator of their informal and close relationship. While such a use of a surname on its own is possible in Chinese, the subtitles instead prefer to use just Bridget’s first name. They change the name used in the dialogue but they maintain a sense of informality.

Another key line in relation to the subtitling of swearing is the phrase “you dirty bitch”. This is clearly an ironic way of mocking Bridget and also has sexual implications in this particular context with Bridget’s speech on nudity. The informality is another indicator of the close relationship between the interlocutors. The word “bitch” in English has a complex history. It refers both to a female dog and is a highly derogatory term for a female. The Chinese subtitles explain the original remark in the Chinese phrase “你很放荡” / “being unrestrained in sexual behaviour” that contains stronger sexual implications than the original. They do not however translate the term “bitch” and, interestingly, the phrase used is not gender specific and might easily be applied to a man or a woman. Clearly, the subtitles opt for a neutral mediation of detailing the sexual habits instead of referring to women directly as a “dirty bitch” / “婊子” (“whore”) to avoid the strong offensiveness targeted at females. Although the original remark is not meant to be demeaning to women but just mockery in context, the chosen word (“bitch”) is particularly demeaning to women in general. The Chinese subtitles thus use a neutral description instead of translating the direct insult attached to the word, which shows that there is a clear intervention. The translator’s deliberate intervention in relation to veiling remarks that are demeaning to women underlines the attempt to improve gender identity (Leonardi 2007, pp. 54-55). The Chinese subtitles do not use a gender specific word. In the context of reception, this is still be understood to be unacceptable behaviour as sexually suggestive topics are less frequently found in the speech of Chinese speakers (Lung 1998,

p. 103), but if reading in association with the “context of situation”, it would be self-explanatory in conjunction with the situational environment under which a language is spoken (Malinowski 1923, p. 306). The playful conversation with its sexual connotations is transferred in a manner more contextually appropriate to Chinese culture. In relation to the target culture’s mental representation (Gutt 1989, p. 26), multiple strategies are adopted to make the translation closer to audiences. The next example is about a conversation in a pub between female friends and one male friend who is homosexual involving taboo language deployed different translation strategies, such as replication, elimination and explication.

Example 2: Pub Conversation between Close Friends

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget and her close friends are drinking at the pub.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: More vodka?*

*ALL: No!*

*TOM: Yes! Fill her up, goddamn it!*

*BRIDGET: At least now I'm in my thirties...*

*I can hold my drink.*

(3) *Translation: 还要伏特加吗?*

*-不要了*

*-要斟满*

*-好在咱们已三十多岁的人*

*多喝几杯也没问题*

(4) *Back Translation: BRIDGET: Still want more Futejia?*

*ALL: No.*

*TOM: Yes, fill up.*

*BRIDGET: It's ok for us to drink more*

*as we are already in our thirties.*

As appropriateness is heavily dependent on context (Jay and Janschewitz 2008, p. 284), the actual utterance “goddamn it” is contextually predictable during pub conversations between close acquaintances. Swearing is appropriate amongst participants of equal status (Jay and Janschewitz 2008, p. 285). The dialogue is conducted among close women

friends and one gay friend on this casual occasion in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. However, the Chinese subtitles completely eliminate this phrase. "Goddamn it" has an interesting status in English language. For some, it is, when used, a violation of the third commandment because people are using God's name in vain. However, in an increasingly secular society in Britain, the phrase "goddamn it" has for many people no offensive meaning. The Chinese subtitles therefore choose to translate the second approach to the phrase "goddamn it", a phrase which for many carries little or no offense. Furthermore, in the context, "goddamn it" adds emphasis to Tom's statement. The Chinese subtitles completely omit this careless statement leading to the loss of meaning communicated by the context in which "goddamn it" appears. The subtitles become only intelligible when they are placed within their "context of situation" (Malinowski 1923, p. 306) and the contextual carelessness is thus unable to pass over as relevant to the target audience.

It is also interesting to note that alcohol consumption among Chinese women is less common than among their western counterparts and even culturally forbidden (Cochrane et al. 2003, p. 540). The choice subtitlers made here however indicates that the translation is faithful to the source culture when it comes to alcohol consumption. Instead of eliminating the cultural taboo entirely, the subtitles' choice concerning alcohol consumption is to keep the original imagery. In contrast, the next example makes clear accommodation for the need of the target audience.

**Example 3: Swearing in Women's Imagination**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget is reluctant to introduce Mark Darcy to her colleague, Perpetua.*

(2) *Line: PERPETUA: Anyone going to introduce me?*

*BRIDGET: ...Perpetua. Ha.*

*This is Mark Darcy.*

*Mark's a prematurely middle-aged prick.*

*with a cruel-raced ex-wife.*

*Perpetua's a fat-ass old bag...*

*who spends her time bossing me around.*

(3) Translation: 嘿 不替我介绍一下吗?

-帕楚拉 这位是马克·达西

马克是中年白痴 未老先衰

前妻冷酷无情

帕楚拉是个一天到晚

管我闲事的老女人

(4) Back Translation:

PERPETUA: *Hey aren't you introducing me?*

BRIDGET: *Pachula this is Make-Daxi.*

*Make is a middle-age idiot becoming senile before his age.*

*His ex-wife is cold-blooded.*

*Pachula is an old woman who sticks her nose into my business  
day and night.*

The scene describes Jones's imaginary conversation as she seeks to introduce people with "thoughtful details". In an imagined situation reflecting Bridget's mind, a humorous and ironic effect stems from Bridget's reluctance and hatred by introducing her colleague Perpetua when audiences clearly see the embarrassment and surprise on Perpetua's face. This is clearly meant to be a very funny scene precisely because it violates the taboo of being rude to someone's face for the British audience. Two offensive words in relation to parts of human body, "prick" and "fat-ass", are found in this line. "Prick" is vulgar slang for a man's sexual organ (*OED*) and also contextually refers to a contemptible male being. "Fat-ass" is a clear insult. In the subtitles' choice, the referential sense relating to the male's sex organ, "prick", is completely omitted. While the original dialogue describes the insult to Darcy in a sexually offensive sense, the Chinese subtitles tone down the offensiveness and explain it. Though the subtitles omit "prick", a highly offensive word in English, they compensate for this reduction of insult by augmenting the insult in the same line relating to age. They take the English "middle-age" and render it as "未老先衰"/ "becoming senile before his age". The word "prick" is vulgar slang and offers a negative judgment on a person. However, it is rendered in the Chinese subtitles with the much milder Chinese expression. The Chinese set phrase "未老先衰"/ "becoming senile before his age" is a colloquial term used to mock those who act like elderly people showing signs



of becoming senile. Moreover, the Chinese subtitles in relation to “fat-ass old bag” are softened as “老女人” / “old woman”. Interestingly, while in the Harry Potter Chapter, we underline that images relating to bodily functions are often transferred in the film’s subtitles, in this instance, the corporeal image, “fat-ass”, is completely omitted. The Chinese subtitles moderate both insults, marking them as much milder than the original. This may be due to the fact that Chinese culture is more cautious than the West in terms of taboo topics like sex and swearing (Elliott et al. 1996, p. 105). The subtitles’ choice is markedly similar when it comes to another swear word, “fuck”, and its variations.

**Example 4: “Fuck” and its Variations**

(1) *Description of Scene: Shazza (Sharon’s nickname), one of Bridget’s close female friends, likes to say “fuck” a lot.*

(2) *Line: SHARON: Fuck’em. Fuck the lot of them.*

*Tell them they can stick fucking Leavis...*

*up their fucking arses.*

(3) *Translation: 去他的 去他的头*

*去他的利维斯*

*告诉他们去死吧*

(4) *Back Translation: SHARON: Damn him damn his head.*

*Damn Liweisi.*

*Tell them to go to die.*

It is interesting to note that though off-colour languages and swear words are more frequently used by male speakers and less used by female speakers (Allan and Burrige 2006, p. 89), this particular case contradicts the above argument in the context of pub conversation among close friends. A speaker is more likely to use taboo languages in the company of the same gender (Allan and Burrige 2006, p. 89). Moreover, males use off-colour words more offensively than females (Allan and Burrige 2006, p. 89). The highly frequent use of the swearwords by women throughout the film seems to be a gender projection, suggesting that women have the same freedom, independence, and rights as men do when using sexual expressions and swear words. Translating these swearwords uttered by women has implications for the notions of gender identity among audiences

(Leonardi 2007, p. 57). In China, under Confucian culture, swearing and obscenity are perceived as far more repulsive in the speech of a woman than that of a man (Chia et al. 1997, p. 144).

The Chinese subtitles' choices in relation to their translation of the vulgar variations of "fuck" is revealing in relation to the appropriateness of "context of situation" (Malinowski 1923, p. 6). In the English dialogue, Sharon aggressively and rudely insults the intellectual snobbery of those who push their knowledge of British literary critic F. R. Leavis in people's faces. In transcribing the name "Leavis" for a Chinese audience with no explanation or initials, the Chinese subtitles effectively remove the cultural reference. The Chinese subtitles also lessen Sharon's vigorous use of "fuck" by avoiding direct swear words. They replace them with fairly neutral alternatives which underline a sense of offense but not profanity. The subtitles' choice of "去他的 去他的头...告诉他们去死吧" ("Damn him damn his head...Tell them to go to die"), is descriptive in relation to physical experience and resembles the original in that it offers an insult. However, the insult in question is adequately and contextually relevant to the audience, as Gutt (1989, p. 101) suggests in his relevance theory. This offensive language is used within the boundaries of what is considered situationally appropriate in discourse (Jay and Janschewitz 2008, p. 268).

In summary, target-culture oriented translation strategies are clearly adopted in the Chinese subtitles when it comes to the translation of swearing in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. When translating offensive comments about women ("you dirty bitch"), the subtitles have to make alterations, recasting the contextual flirtation and rendering the semantic representation ("你很放荡" / "being unrestrained in sexual behaviour") to resemble the original meaning without objectifying women. Additionally, when subtitling "arsey", "goddamn" and "fuck" and its variations, the Chinese subtitles' choice is to moderate them with less vulgar and much milder description to convey insult but in a moderated way.

#### 5.4.2. Sex-Related Languages

In this section, reference is made to sexual taboos – closely associated with female speakers drawn from the film *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Sexual language, according to Ruby Rich (1998, p. 257), has become a marker of female emancipation since the 1990s.

According to Dennis Enright (1985, p. 59), thanks to the rhetoric of euphemism and colloquialism, people increasingly talk about sex with less embarrassment. Enright (1985, p. 68) concurs that the frequent use of sexual languages by women promotes women's liberation movements. As Jinhua Li (2007a, p. 3) suggests, the use of gendered discourse in film narratives may be a means of promoting female identity. At first glance, the analysis in this section will look at directly sexual languages in sexual situations. However, there are clearly non-sexual discourses drawn from the film that are not directly related to sex or/and in an implicitly sexual situation. Read in association with "the general conditions under which a language is spoken" (Malinowski 1923, p. 6), the above indicated languages become intentionally or unintentionally sexual because of the "context of situation". Therefore, this section will also consider the use of contextually sexual languages in sexually suggestive situations.

Example 5 Sexual Expression: A Well-timed Blow Job

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget and her friends are drinking wine at a pub. Tom, a homosexual, is fantasising about a handsome guy like Daniel Cleaver.*

(2) *Line: TOM: Is that Cleaver chap still as cute as ever?*

*BRIDGET: Oh, God, yes.*

*TOM: Then I think a well-timed blow job's...  
probably the best answer.*

(3) *Translation: 那个丹尼尔还是那么英俊?*

*—是呀*

*我想及时地哄哄他 应该有帮助*

(4) *Back Translation: TOM: That Dannier is still as handsome as ever?*

*BRIDGET: Yes.*

*TOM: I think pleasing him in time would be helpful.*

In Tom's discourse in English, we find that he flirtatiously suggests providing sexual services ("a well-timed blow job") when Bridget encounters difficulties with her boss, Cleaver. When rendering what is a sexual taboo subject in polite conversation, "a well-timed blow job", the subtitles downgrade the explicitly sexual expression via a contextual equivalent, "及时地哄哄他" / "pleasing him in time". The sexually explicit message to

which it is attached is transformed into a fairly neutral expression which refers to providing comfort to someone who is upset. This translational approach clearly caters to the needs of the target culture. The expression in relation to the idiomatic translation means that “(1) the translation makes a natural use of the linguistic structures of the RL [receptor language] and that (2) the recipients of the translation understand the message with ease”, as developed by Beekman and Callow (1974, p. 34). Therefore, the Chinese subtitles use an abstract expression, “及时地哄哄他” / “pleasing him in time” to avoid directly sexual references. They use a phrase which is linguistically and culturally appropriate in the Chinese context when translating sexuality. This is due to the fact that Chinese culture still acknowledges sex-related references as a moral and ethical prohibition (Santaemilia 2008, p. 246). Interestingly, the next instance opens debate towards the above argument in relation to employing implicit languages to transfer sexually explicit messages.

Example 6 Sexual Expression: To Get Laid

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget is introducing Tom who used to be a successful singer. At the same time, Tom is staring at another man with clear sexual desire.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: Tom...*

*Eighties pop icon  
who only wrote  
one hit record...  
then retired because  
he found that one record...  
was quite enough  
to get him laid...  
for the whole of the Nineties.*

(3) *Translation: 汤姆 八十年代的歌星*

*只写了一首畅销曲就退休  
因为他发现这足够了  
让他在九十年代  
得到充分的性满足*

(4) *Back Translation: BRIDGET: Tangmu, a singer from the Eighties*

*only wrote one hit song and then retired  
because he found that this was enough  
to ensure him complete sexual satisfaction  
throughout the Nineties.*

Instead of reframing and repositioning the ideology of the text in a sexually implicit way as the previous Example 5 does, the present example actively conveys the sexual languages of its source. It is striking to note that while female sexual languages or languages relating to female sexual activities were moderated and mediated in the previous example, in this male context, the sexual language of the source is actively conveyed. What the dialogue underlines is that the translation of the source text “to get him laid” is linguistically rendered as “让他...得到充分的性满足”/ “to ensure him complete sexual satisfaction”. The sexual rewards are often part and parcel of being a celebrity and clearly convey to a Chinese audience. While the sexual content of the English language is translated, the subtitles alter the register. The slang term “to get laid” is explained in more formal terms in Chinese. Having discussed sexual languages in non-sexual contexts, the following section is focused on contextually sexual languages in sexual situations.

**Example 7: Animal Copulation**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget watches a documentary about animal copulation on television.*

(2) *Line: NARRATOR: The male penetrates the female and leaves.*

*Coitus is brief and perfunctory...  
and the female...  
Continues indistinctly*

(3) *Translation: 雄性在与雌性交配后就匆匆离去*

*交配短促草草了事  
此后雌性只有苦苦等待*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*NARRATOR: The male leaves hurriedly after copulating with the female.*

*Copulation is quick and hasty.*

*The female afterwards waits bitterly for the male.*

Although sexual activity is perceived as a taboo topic in public in some countries (Allan and BurrIDGE 2006, p. 144), animal copulation, a natural phenomenon, is often something of an exception. The subtitles, as we have seen from Example 5 and Example 6, adopt a dynamic approach to the subtitling process, mediating and softening the sexual language used by women in the film. At times, they accurately convey male sexuality and desire when it relates to the male character, Tom. When describing sex using scientific terms (*to penetrate* and *coitus*) in this narration, the Chinese subtitles also accurately convey the sources' descriptions of animal sexuality. Dysphemistic reference here relates to one of the remedies for people to talk about sex in a less embarrassing way: "From the fact of our animality, of which sex for a good part of our lives can be a nagging reminder, euphemism, dysphemism and slang can afford relief; they permit us to talk about sex less directly" (Enright 1985, p. 59). The visual context of the scene is sexually explicit as it depicts animal copulation. The Chinese subtitles choose a technical term, "交配"/"copulation" to maintain the biological sexual nature of the original. By using these zoological terms, non-dysphemistic reference is made (Allan and BurrIDGE 2006, p. 42). Bridget watching this scene of animal copulation may invite the audience to link it to her own experience as a sexual being who has been cheated on by her boyfriend. Although the zoological terms "to penetrate" and "coitus" are neutral, Bridget's agony and disappointment are made clearer via the film dialogue in this particular heart-breaking context. In contrast to this particular example, the following case makes multiple alterations in relation to the translation of female sexual languages in sexual context to cater for the target audiences. Interestingly, this act of alteration again takes place in an instance relating to female sexual behaviour.

*Example 8 Female Sexual Behaviour: A Very Bad Man between Her Thighs*

(1) *Description of Scene: Daniel and Bridget are engaged in sexual activity. Bridget is talking dirty words when she answers a phone call from her mother.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: Bridget Jones, wanton sex goddess...*

*with a very bad man between her thighs.*

Mum. Hi.

(3) Translation: 这是布里吉特

荡妇 性爱女神

还有个坏男人在她这儿

妈妈? 嗨

(4) Back Translation:

BRIDGET: This is Bulijite.

An unrestrained-in-sexual-behaviour woman and sex and love goddess.

Also there is a bad man with her.

Mum? Hi.

Before Bridget is answering the phone, Bridget and Daniel are engaged in sexual act. The way she speaks on the phone is playful, humorous, and sexually suggestive. The translation of the expression “wanton sex goddess”, referring to a woman who is sexually powerful and prolific, is clearly maintained in the Chinese rendering “荡妇 性爱女神”/ “an unrestrained-in-sexual-behaviour woman and sex and love goddess”. The sexual reference and humour as Bridget inappropriately talks sex with her mother are actively transferred to Chinese culture via the descriptive expression. In addition, without consulting the subtitles, audiences are able to understand the ongoing sexual act where Bridget’s laughter and Daniel’s titillating facial expression, and their partial nakedness are clearly shown in the actual scene. By presenting the sexually suggestive words from Bridget, the visual and auditory representation of the scene also invites the audience to be aware of the previously ongoing sexual act. Multimodality composites representations in manifold modes chosen from “rhetorical aspects or its communicational potentials” to interpret the truth or validity of the word within the depicted scene. If Bridget’s sexuality is subtitled in relation to “wanton sex goddess”, that relating to “a very bad man between her thighs” is not. This is moderated to a fairly neutral expression in Chinese, “还有个坏男人在她这儿” / “also there is a bad man with her”, detailing less sexual connotation than the original. Bridget’s body in the sex act is taken out of the Chinese subtitles. Shifting strategies are thus employed in this section of dialogue (whether translating or lessening the sexual details of the original). They depend on the level of acceptance of the target

culture concerning the translation of sexuality and offensiveness. They also appear to depend on the gender of the desiring subject.

Multiple translation strategies are adopted. Clear explicitness is employed to make the sexual transfer when translating “wanton sex goddess”, while a fairly implicit expression is used to avoid the transfer of details relating to the sexual act (“a bad man between her thighs”). A general substitution has been made to cater to the target culture’s norms in terms of sexual morality (Santaemilia 2008, pp. 222-226). However, a clear attempt can also be seen to transfer sexual references for Chinese audiences when they relate to homosexual male desire: (“得到充分的性满足”/ “to ensure him complete sexual satisfaction”).

**Example 9: Conversation during a Sexual Act**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget and Daniel are about to have sexual intercourse while talking in a sexual and playful way.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: Do you love me?*

*DANIEL: Shut up, or I’ll do it again.*

*BRIDGET: Do you love me?*

*DANIEL: Right. You asked for it.*

*And over we go.*

*I’m going to give you something to bite on.*

*Here.*

*Ok? Pop this in your mouth, darling.*

*You’re begging for it.*

*BRIDGET: Stop it!*

(3) *Translation: 你爱我吗?*

*-住嘴 否则我再来一次*

*你爱我吗?*

*-这可是你自找的 转过去*

*我给你个可以 咬住的东西*

*就是这个宝贝*

*把它放在嘴里*



你真是快要发疯了

-住手

(4) Back Translation: BRIDGET: Do you love me?

DANIEL: Stop asking otherwise I will do it again

BRIDGET: Do you love me?

DANIEL: You ask for this turn around

I am giving you something to bite

This is it babe

Put it in your mouth

You are becoming crazy

BRIDGET: Hold your hand.

In Cleaver's utterance, the language use describes sex but is not itself innately sexual. However, read in association with the setting, gestures and facial expressions, the contextual situation is sexually explicit. The playful conversation between Bridget and Daniel with clear sexual overtones does not always coincide with a visual representation of a sexual act in the actual scene. Daniel is fantasising putting something in Bridget's mouth that invites audiences to link it with oral sex. The above fantasy is not visually presented to the audiences but compensates for acoustic effect. The titillating and embarrassing laughter reveal Bridget's anticipation of enjoyment. According to Baldry and Thibault's (2006, p. 54) model of multimodality, textual composition of multimodal texts – such as visual, acoustic, gestural resources (in this example) – link intertextually to explore meaning in context. This model applies to this instance as the sexuality and obscenity under this circumstance are contextually appropriate. The viewers thereby can get an immediate sexual impression by accessing a series of implicatures caused by the dialogue and activities between the couple (Desilla 2012, p. 47). The Chinese subtitles are able to use comparably neutral expressions to subtitle a scene which is still clearly sexual. The linguistic strategies of the subtitles are thus in this instance very similar to their source. The images of the uncut film – the Chinese authorities did not cut the sex scene – make the language and situation sexual.

The next category is concerned with contextually sexual languages in sexually suggestive situations which nevertheless have clear sexual overtones. As a wide range of

translational approaches have been detected to bridge the gap of sexuality and gender between both countries, the following categories offer an innovative insight.

Example 10: Pub Conversation with Close Friends

(1) *Description of Scene: Sharon teaches Bridget to introduce people with thoughtful details.*

(2) *Line: SHARON: Sheila...*

*This is Daniel. Daniel, this is Sheila.*

*Sheila enjoys horse-riding and comes from New Zealand.*

*Daniel enjoys publishing and comes...*

*BRIDGET: all over your face?*

(3) *Translation: 希拉 这是丹尼尔*

*丹尼尔 这是希拉*

*希拉喜欢骑马 是新西兰人*

*丹尼尔从事出版业 是...*

*-喜欢玩弄女性*

(4) *Back Translation: SHARON: Xila this is Dannier*

*Dannier this is Xila*

*Xila comes from Xinxilan enjoying horse riding*

*Danier works for publishing industry enjoying...*

*BRIDGET: playing on women.*

In Sharon's attempt to introduce people with thoughtful details, Bridget interrupts to suggest Daniel's enjoyment in coming over women's faces. The English dialogue contains a pun on the word "come", a verb indicating place of origin (this meaning requires the preposition "from" after "come") and male ejaculation. Bridget's interruption has clear sexual connotations and the timing of her interruption is crucial for this desired effect. However, the Chinese subtitles mediate the sexual transfer by rendering it as "喜欢玩弄女性"/ "enjoying playing on women". They showcase Daniel as a glamorous playboy and the explicitly sexual reference regarding sperm ejection is completely deleted in Chinese. Rachel Lung (1998, p. 103) argues that the key reason why Chinese subtitlers often mistranslate or undertranslate sexual jokes is their insufficient knowledge of the idiomatic

expressions used in the foreign language. This may explain the deletion of the humour found in the original dialogue. Furthermore, the Chinese subtitles' choice indicates that a neutral expression is used to make the content appropriate for the target culture instead of translating the sexually explicit expression. The next example adheres to the present case, recasting the sexual implication into a more neutral Chinese equivalence.

Example 11: Demonstrating How to Use an Egg Peeler

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget's Mum is selling an egg peeler and demonstrating how to use it.*

(2) *Line: PAMELA: Ah, anyone else wants to have it off?*

*Haha. Don't be shy, madame.*

*French. Have it oeuf. Ha ha! With the wisecrack egg peeler.*

*Now, nice firm grip.*

*Put it in the hole. And...*

*Up, down, up down.*

*And off it comes in your hand.*

*Oh! Mind the over-spray. Sorry.*

(3) *Translation: 还有谁想要试试看?*

*别害羞 太太*

*法国的 试试看*

*用聪明剥壳器*

*稳稳地握住*

*把蛋放在洞里*

*上下上下大功告成了*

*哦 小心溅出来*

(4) *Back Translation: PAMELA: Who else wants to try?*

*Don't be shy, Madame.*

*From France, do you want to have a try?*

*With this smart egg peeler.*

*Grip it firmly.*

*Put the egg in the hole.*

*Up and down, up and down, and the task is accomplished.*

*Oh, be careful with the overspray.*

The original film's dialogue takes a clear approach to embodying sexual implication where sexual intercourse takes place through the metaphor of a demonstration of operating an egg extractor. The Chinese subtitles use a more neutral expression and have less sexual implication than the original. Again multimodality enables the contextual interpretation (Baldry and Thibault 2006, p. 18). Audiences are likely to be fully aware of the sexual connotation of the scene thanks to the setting, sound and the embarrassing and awkward facial expressions on the characters' faces. The original dialogue contains elements of French, it uses the phrase "have it oeuf": phonetically, this is a play on words which relates to the sex act: "to have it off". The Chinese subtitles cannot replicate this play on words or this move between languages and therefore this egg pun is omitted and its sexual overtone removes from the subtitles. Another key passage, "nice firm grip...up, down, up, down...and off it comes in your hand...mind the over-spray", underlines masturbation. The Chinese subtitles cannot replicate the explicitly sexual message either. They become "稳稳地握住...上下 上下 大功告成了...哦 小心溅出来" / "Grip it firmly ...Up and down, up and down, and the task is accomplished...Oh, be careful with the overspray" in a fairly neutral way of demonstrating how to use an egg peeler. The embarrassing laughter and facial expression from the bystanders compensate for the loss of meaning communicated by the subtitles. This reduction in the sexual discourse of the source is echoed in Example 12.

**Example 12: Sexually Suggestive Expression: A Big Knobhead with No Knob**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget is trying to comfort one of her best friends, Jude, who just broke up with her boyfriend.*

(2) *Line: JUDE: I'm too needy.*

*Am I co-dependent<sup>82</sup>?*

*BRIDGET: No, you're not.*

*It's not you.*

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<sup>82</sup> A co-dependent person has a strong need to control other people's behaviour and has a feeling of inadequacy and insecurity (Karen Espeland and Linda Shanta 2001, p. 343).

*You're lovely.*

*It's vile Richard.*

*Ugh. He's just a big knobhead with no knob.*

(3) Translation: 我是不是依赖性太强了?

-你当然不是 不是你的错

你很可爱

都是那卑鄙的理查德

他是个没种的混蛋

(4) Back Translation: JUDE: Am I too dependent?

BRIDGET: Of course no. It's not your fault.

*You are adorable.*

*It is the despicable Lichade.*

*He is a bastard having no guts.*

There is a word play with the repetitive use of *knob* with different meanings: *knob head*, a vulgar slang term, is “a disparaging term for a person” (*OED*) while *knob* is an offensive term for the male’s sexual organ. The repetition is not replicated in the Chinese subtitles which instead seek to offer insult with no sexual overtones. In Chinese, a possible equivalent could be “他是个没蛋的混蛋” / “He is a bastard having no ball” that preserves the sexual overtones enacted from the repetition (In Chinese, “蛋”/ “ball” refers to the sexual organ of a men in slangy style). In fact, in order to avoid taboo languages, the translation offers a moderate neutralisation with the rendering “他是个没种的混蛋” / “He is a bastard having no guts”. Furthermore, the original line has a clear humorous effect referring to a man without his sexual organ while the subtitles soften the offensiveness in relation to sexual dysfunction, making no sexual references. A friendly euphemism is employed to make the phrase less embarrassing or offensive (Allan and Burridge 2006, p. 39).

To summarise, while there are common approaches to the subtitles’ translation of sexual taboo — target-culture directed approaches to downgrade the level of sexual explicitness —, so too are there instances in which sexual transfer is made. Specific subtitles maintain sexually explicit messages by detailing the sexual description. It is intriguing however that,

as this section has suggested, male and zoological discourses of sexuality are more directly transferred than instances related directly to female desire and sexual activity.

#### 5.4.3. Euphemism and Humour

In addition to swearing and sexuality, there are taboo topics that are dealt with in a humorous and euphemistic way, frequently present in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The film intends to make taboo subjects accessible to the audience who are encouraged to participate in the creation of laughter (Desilla 2012, p. 34). Humour is used in order to approach taboo topics and to lessen their taboo status (Enright 1985, p. 59). Taboo topics are, as this section will make clear, often approached euphemistically in *Bridget Jones's Diary*, a film which explores core images of female identity. The transfer of female gender ideology from this Anglophone film to a Chinese context raises core issues of cultural mediation.

#### Example 13: Euphemism and Sex

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget's mother tells Bridget that Mark has been betrayed by his ex-wife.*

(2) *Line: PAMELA: Poor Mark. It's always a bad time of year for him.*

*You know, his Japanese wife left him on Christmas Day.*

*Cruel race.*

*BRIDGET: Yes, but I'm not quite sure...*

*he didn't deserve it, actually.*

*PAMELA: She ran off with his best friend from Cambridge.*

*Total scoundrel, apparently.*

*Best man at his wedding.*

*Christmas Eve, Mark comes home early from work...*

*finds the pair of them in a most unorthodox position...*

*stark naked, at it like rabbits.*

(3) *Translation: 可怜的马克*

*这段时间他最难过了*

*他的日本太太就是*

在圣诞节离开了他  
真是个冷漠的民族  
-说不定是他罪有应得  
-她和他剑桥大学里最好的朋友跑了  
真是个大恶棍  
还是他婚礼的男宾相呢  
圣诞夜 马克提早回家  
却发现他们一丝不挂  
就像兔子一样

(4) Back Translation:

PAMELA: Poor Make.

*He feels the saddest in this period of time.*

*His Japanese wife left him on Christmas.*

*Such a cruel race.*

BRIDGET: *I am not sure if he didn't deserve it.*

*She ran off with his best friend from Jianqiao University.*

*He is a total villain*

*also as a best man at his wedding.*

*On Christmas Eve, Make came home earlier.*

*only to find them having nothing on (no silk as covering material)*

*just like rabbits.*

Both source dialogue and subtitle make use of euphemism to represent sexual intercourse and to convey Pamela's unwillingness to discuss sex with her daughter. The euphemism used however changes. Pamela's dialogue in English references an unusual sex position as well as the character's nakedness. The Chinese subtitles use a Chinese four-character idiom “一丝不挂” / “to have nothing on” (no silk as covering material) (*C-E Dictionary*) to convey the character's nakedness but they omit any reference to sexual angles. The subtitles also seek to translate the English idiom of the source, “to go at it like rabbits”, a phrase underlining vigorous and repeated sexual activities. Strikingly though, the subtitles offer equivalence of noun – they translate rabbits literally – but they do not offer

equivalence of concept or idiom. Rabbits in Chinese are not habitually associated with sexual promiscuity and therefore the subtitle stands out as a mediated and only partially translated phrase. There is approximation of approach between subtitles and source. The euphemistic description of sexual activities is appropriate for the Chinese target audience (Allan and Burridge 2006, p. 53). Instead of applying euphemism to avoid sexual description, the next case clearly adheres to the sexual expression of the original by means of linguistic equivalence.

Example 14: Humorous Expression of Obscenity

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget humorously introduces Daniel's superior.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: Mr. Fitzherbert – Tits Pervert, more like.*

*Daniel's boss who stares freely at my breasts...*

*with no idea who I am or what I do.*

(3) *Translation: 菲茨赫伯先生是个窥波狂*

*也是丹尼尔的上司*

*他只知道盯着我的胸部看*

*却不知道我是谁*

(4) *Back Translation: BRIDGET: Mr. Feicihebo is a tits peeping maniac.*

*also as Dannier's superior.*

*All he knows is staring at my breasts.*

*but doesn't know who I am.*

In the film dialogue, Daniel's superior is Mr. Fitzherbert, a man whose name rhymes with *Titspervert* and can be separated into *tits* and *pervert*. Bridget plays on language, altering his name in a play on words which illustrates his lewd nature. Chinese norms in subtitling lead to this name being transliterated and the play on words being lost. The Chinese subtitles compensate for this loss by doubling the explanation offered by the source dialogue. In the original English, Bridget explains the nickname of this man who "stares freely at my breasts". The Chinese subtitles translate this line "他只知道盯着我的胸部看" / "All he knows is staring at my breasts". To explain the missing play on words, the subtitles add a gloss of sorts in relation to the character, calling him "窥波狂" / "tits peeping maniac". The Chinese subtitles' gloss compensates for the loss of humour as a



consequence of the difficulty in reproducing the word play. In English, Bridget addresses this man as “Tits Pervert”. *Tits* relates to “a woman’s breasts” in slang term and *pervert* “a person whose sexual behaviour or inclinations are regarded as abnormal and unacceptable” (*OED*). The Chinese subtitles increase the vulgarity of this term, using a highly colloquial register “波”/ “tits” and a term relating to an obsession. Humour is generated by the increased vulgarity Bridget uses to describe a man she is insulting in graphic terms. The humorous effect is preserved in Chinese thanks to the use of explanation in relation to the vulgarity as Bridget addresses Mr. Fitzherbert. In the subtitles’ choice of the next case in relation to a historical taboo, *Auschwitz*, the humorous effect of the film dialogue is hardly maintained in linguistic terms and the subtitles are keen to use a neutralised expression.

**Example 15 Historical Taboo: Auschwitz**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget’s mother tries to fix her up with some divorced men and asks her to put on the clothes she lent to her over Christmas.*

(2) *Line: PAMELA: Now, what are you going to put on?*

*BRIDGET: This.*

*PAMELA: Oh, don’t be silly, Bridget.*

*You’ll never get a boyfriend...*

*if you look like you’ve wandered out of Auschwitz.*

*Now, run upstairs.*

*I’ve laid out something lovely on your bed.*

*BRIDGET: Great. I was wearing a carpet.*

(3) *Translation: 你一会儿要穿什么衣服?*

*-就这身*

*-别傻了*

*穿得像集中营里跑出来的*

*怎么交到男朋友?*

*快上楼*

*床上有条漂亮裙子*

*-好*

我像穿了条花地毯似的

(4) Back Translation: PAMELA: What are you going to put on?

BRIDGET: This.

PAMELA: Don't be silly.

How can you get a boyfriend

if looking like you've ran out of concentration camp?

Run upstairs.

There is a beautiful dress on the bed.

BRIDGET: Okay.

I look like as if I was wearing a floral carpet.

Translating a historical or cultural taboo with humorous effect is particularly significant in this section. *Auschwitz* is considered as a historical taboo in a European context because of the unspeakably cruel and vicious history concerning the extermination of Jews in concentration camps (Dundes and Hauschild 1983, p. 249). In historical terms, *Auschwitz* is imprinted on the continent's cultural history and memory. Using this cultural monument in a highly inappropriate way, Bridget's mother references the atrocity as a joke in relation to Bridget's embarrassing appearance in relation to the wearing of grey clothes. *Auschwitz* is not a culturally accessible reference for a broad Chinese audience. The subtitles therefore explain *Auschwitz* in the neutralised expression, “集中营” / “concentration camp”. *Auschwitz's* historical specificity and horror completely disappear in linguistic terms. The subtitles tap into the Chinese knowledge<sup>83</sup> of the existence of concentration camps as a broad phenomenon in World War II and more generally, but they do not do so in geographically specific terms. They do not transliterate the place name. Instead, they explain it as a concept.

To sum up, the subtitles regarding the euphemism and humour present in the case of *Bridget Jones's Diary* indicate the range of linguistic and sexual transfer that the subtitles

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<sup>83</sup> In China, there are also concentration camps. Horrendous as conditions may have been for prisoners in these camps, they operated and functioned differently from those in Nazi Germany. Auschwitz showed the contempt for human life and other extermination camps erected by Nazi Germany in the 1940s. The Japanese invaders first established concentration camps in China and Asia, with an atrocious purpose to use the prisoners as human guinea pigs in a series of experiments to develop war-related germ between 1937 and 1945 (Mühlhahn 2010, p. 550).

employ when translating. Interestingly, when translating the sexual scene using metaphor, “the pair of them in a most unorthodox position...stark naked, at it like rabbits”, the subtitles make alterations, omitting sexual position and using a more polite and formal Chinese equivalence via a four-character idiom, “一丝不挂” / “to have nothing on” (no silk as covering material). In contrast, this politeness does not extend to the derogative appellation of Mr. Fitzherbert’s as *Tiits Pervert*. In the subtitles’ choice, “窥波狂” / “tits peeper maniac” is accurately reproduced to accommodate linguistic equivalence. Indeed, the explanation is magnified to compensate for the lack of the play on words in the character’s name. Last but equally important, there is a rhetorical strategy in the historical taboo, *Auschwitz*. The subtitles explain the concept behind the place name which they do not transliterate. The Chinese subtitles use a range of linguistic and cultural strategies to meet the needs of their Chinese audiences.

#### 5.4.4. Women, Food Products, Boyfriends and Clothes

This section explores items and topics that lie at the heart of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. Women, food products, boyfriends and clothes are present as key features in this chick flick that invite the audience to experience a cultural appetite in association with sexuality and gender transfer in the Chinese subtitling of *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. This chapter will now turn to analyse the subtitling of this category in the case-study film. Consideration of the Chinese subtitles in relation to the food products *gherkin* and *marmalade* underline that British and Chinese approaches to cooking in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* are markedly different. And the Chinese subtitles relating to Bridget’s “New Year resolutions” in relation to her potential boyfriends, granny pants and “Christmas jumpers” generate a comparable humour to the original film.

#### Example 16 Food Product: Gherkin

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget comes back home for a family reunion over Christmas.*

*And she is introducing her mother.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: My Mum...*

*a strange creature from the time...*

*when the gherkin was still the height of sophistication.*

*UNA: Doilies, Pam? Hello, Bridget.*

PAMELA: *Third drawer from the top, Una.*

*Under the mini gherkins.*

(3) Translation: 我妈是个怪人

不懂得什么叫优雅

-茶杯垫呢? 嗨 布里吉特

-第三个抽屉里 酸黄瓜 下面

(4) Back Translation: BRIDGET: *My Mum is a strange person*

*not knowing what elegance is.*

UNA: *Where is the cup mat? Hi Bulijite.*

PAMELA: *It's in the third drawer under the sour cucumber.*

The subtitles in this context completely recast the imagery of their source. In the English dialogue, Bridget criticises her Mum as being out of date, stuck in 1970s when *gherkins* featured strongly in recipes as a fashionable food. The subtitles either do not understand or choose not to convey the temporal element of the English. They translate that Bridget's Mum is not innately elegant. They do not suggest that she once was. Moreover, the translation of *doilies* not only adds to this lack of a temporal dimension in the subtitles, it also underlines that even when there is cultural equivalence between English and Chinese, it is rarely exact. *Doilies* in English are a comparatively dated item associated with elderly ladies. The English dialogue uses just "gherkin" to reinforce Bridget's description of her Mum as out of date. "茶杯垫" / "cup mat" has no such temporal association in Chinese. It is something in common use. And while it is culturally equivalent in a vague sense, it underlines the shifts that inevitably take place even between comparable objects. *Doilies* is a piece of cloth which may be placed under cups, vases, plates, or crockery in general. In Chinese "茶杯垫" / "cup mat" is far more specific regarding the object with which it is used and it may also be made of a variety of materials (wood, plastic, linen, ceramic, etc.). The subtitles thus translate the general concept of the object, or at least aspects of it. But the equivalence is partial. Another curious use of *mini gherkins* refers to the actual variety of cucumber that is replicated in the Chinese subtitles as "酸黄瓜" / "sour cucumber" without mentioning its size. This may be due to the popularity of this food in Chinese market as it is commonly sold in its normal sliced size as an appetiser. The next case in

point considers the translation of a culturally specific jam in Britain, *marmalade*. The approach of explication is also employed to make the cultural transfer.

Example 17 Food Products: Marmalade

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget is cooking for her friends who come to celebrate her birthday.*

(2) *Line: MARK: I have to say, this really is the most incredible shit.*

*This is the worst of the three.*

*SHARON: It does actually remind me of something.*

*It tastes like...*

*JUDE: marmalade.*

(3) *Translation: 简直不可思议 差劲到了极点*

*这是三道菜里最糟的*

*-它的味道有点儿像*

*-橘子酱*

(4) *Back Translation: MARK: It's indeed unimaginable at its worst.*

*This is the worst among the three courses.*

*SHARON: It tastes like.*

*JUDE: Orange jam.*

Prior to the translation of *marmalade*, there is a humorous use of language in relation to a comment on Bridget's cooking, *the most incredible shit*. The English use of *shit* is in a metaphorical way to mean something bad rather than actually excrement. In translating the swearing, the Chinese subtitles actively convey the insult to Bridget's cooking but thus take out the vulgar language in the rendering “差劲到了极点” / “at its worst”. The Chinese subtitles clearly use a much politer expression than the original colloquial style, *the most incredible shit*. When it comes to the translation of *marmalade*, the subtitles' choice is coherent with the previous *gherkin* example, adopting the approach of explication. In the previous example, *gherkins* was rendered as “酸黄瓜” / “sour cucumber”. The translation, “橘子酱” / “orange jam” is successfully transferred to the target culture through the descriptive expression. Jam as a food product is recognisably foreign in a Chinese context. However, the visuals of the film aid audience's

comprehension with an image of the food product in question. What follows in the next case underlines Bridget's "New Year resolutions" in terms of her love life. Linguistic equivalence is also detected to make the transfer of sexuality and gender-related concepts.

Example 18: New Year Resolutions

(1) *Description of Scene: In Bridget's New Year resolutions, she determines to find a sensible boyfriend.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: Equally important...*

*will find a nice sensible boyfriend to go out with...*

*and not continue to form romantic attachments...*

*to any of the following...*

*alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics...*

*peeping Toms, megalomaniacs...*

*emotional fuckwits, or perverts.*

(3) *Translation: 同样重要的是*

*找个温柔体贴的男朋友*

*不能再和这几种人浪漫下去*

*酒鬼 工作狂 结婚恐惧症*

*偷窥狂 夸大狂 爱情白痴*

*或是性饥渴*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*BRIDGET: It's equally important*

*to find a gentle and considerate boyfriend.*

*Cannot go out with the following kinds of people.*

*Drinking ghost working maniac a person who has phobia about marriage*

*peeping maniac boasting maniac an idiot of love affairs*

*or people who are thirsty for sex.*

In Bridget's *New Year resolutions*, she aims to find a sensible boyfriend and excludes the following types of men on her list: "alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics...peeping Toms, megalomaniacs...emotional fuckwits, or perverts". The list is

negatively described by Bridget. Intriguingly, the negativity is rendered in the Chinese subtitles with the comparable colloquial tone: “酒鬼 工作狂 结婚恐惧症 偷窥狂 夸大狂 爱情白痴 或是性饥渴” / “Drinking ghost, working maniac, a person who has phobia about marriage, peeping maniac, boasting maniac or an idiot of love affairs or people who are thirsty for sex”. While the Chinese subtitles replicate the colloquial term, they do not replicate the passage’s swearing. *Fuckwits* therefore becomes “爱情白痴” / “idiot of love affairs”. Comparably, *perverts*, a person who seeks rude, deviant and unacceptable sex, becomes someone just with a strong desire for sex (“性饥渴” / “thirsty for sex”). What these two examples show is the constant mediation and accommodation of the vulgarity of the source for the Chinese target audience. The following case considers a female garment, large pants designed to flatten the stomach. The item is used for its humorous effect.

**Example 19 Female Garment: Scary Stomach-holding-in Pants**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget is choosing an underwear to make herself sexually attractive.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: Hmm. Major dilemma.*

*If actually do, by some terrible chance...*

*end up in flagrant...*

*surely these would be most attractive at the crucial moment.*

*However, chances of reaching crucial moment...*

*greatly increase by wearing these.*

*Scary stomach-holding-in pants.*

*Very popular with grannies*

*the world over.*

*Ha. Tricky. Very tricky.*

(3) *Translation: 我该怎么办呢?*

*如果机遇凑巧 造化弄人*

*这一条在关键的时刻*

*能发出致命的诱惑*

*反过来说*

要想那关键时刻来临  
这一条必不可少  
这条老奶奶的束腹裤  
会不会把他吓跑?  
真是难以选择

(4) Back Translation:

*BRIDGET: What should I do?*

*By some terrible chance the god of destiny makes fools of the people  
It would be most attractive  
at the crucial moment.*

*Otherwise*

*It is necessary to have this pant  
to reach that crucial moment.*

*Wearing this granny's stomach-holding-in pants  
will I scare him away?*

*It is indeed hard to choose.*

In Bridget's discourse, she humorously describes the "scary stomach-holding-in pants" when she is ready to enhance her sexual attraction by wearing them. The Chinese subtitles' choice in relation to their translation of the female pants is revealing in relation to the question of linguistic equivalence. Intriguingly, the Chinese subtitles echo the humorous effect, translating "scary stomach-holding-in pants" as "这条老奶奶的束腹裤" / "this granny's stomach-holding-in pants". Like the source English, they generate humour by associating sexual activity with an elderly generation not often assumed to engage in sexual activities. However, the Chinese subtitles recast the English "scary", rewriting it in the phrase "会不会把他吓跑" / "Will I scare him away?". The Chinese rendering of "scary stomach-holding-in pants" is more formal in style than the original cinematic dialogue which is chatty and informal. These phrases, in English, stand out linguistically and structurally while their Chinese subtitles are more descriptive and informative. If the subtitles in this example explain the pant for their target audience, those relating to our next example, "Christmas jumpers", offer a key insight into the subtitles' curious use of translational terms for the receiving culture.



**Example 20 Clothes: Christmas Jumpers**

(1) *Description of Scene: Bridget bumps into Mark at the book launch.*

(2) *Line: BRIDGET: What are you doing here?*

*MARK: I've been asking myself the same question.*

*I came with a colleague.*

*So how are you?*

*BRIDGET: Well, apart from being very disappointed...*

*not to see my favourite reindeer jumper again...*

*I'm well.*

(3) *Translation: 你来这儿干什么？*

*-我也在问我自己呢*

*我和同事一起来的 你好吗？*

*-很失望*

*没看到你穿那件驯鹿的套头衫*

*除此之外 我还不错*

(4) *Back Translation: BRIDGET: Why do you come here?*

*MARK: I am asking myself the same question.*

*I came with my colleagues how are you?*

*BRIDGET: Very disappointed.*

*Because I haven't seen you wear that reindeer's jumper*

*Apart from this I am doing good*

In the rendering of this iconic British phenomenon, “Christmas jumpers”, the Chinese subtitles stick closely to the source dialogue in order to explain a phenomenon which does not exist in Chinese culture. They are aided in their mission by the film’s images of the jumpers in question which make clear the fashion item which the Chinese culture does not have. With the line, “驯鹿的套头衫” / “reindeer’s jumper”, the target audience will comprehend the translated terms while not conceiving the cultural origin in relation to the western festival of Christmas. Christmas, though not a Chinese festival, is visible and culturally comprehensible in China. Therefore, with the visual clues of the film and the

images of the jumpers, the subtitles do enough to make the Christmas jumper phenomenon legible.

As was previously stated, explication is the frequently adopted approach in translating items and activities often associated with women, food products, boyfriends and clothes in the film of *Bridget Jones's Diary*. When the original cinematic dialogue is evaluated in a clear negative sense in the example of Bridget's "New Year resolutions" that actively explain the type of men Bridget is avoiding, "alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics, peeping Toms, megalomaniacs, emotional fuckwits, or perverts", the Chinese subtitles do not translate the swearing. Comparably, the Chinese subtitles explain *gherkin*, granny pants and, with the film's visual effect, Christmas jumper.

### 5.5. Conclusion

Using three situational categories of recurrent features (swearing, sexuality and humour) in a chick flick, as well as adding one further classification of "women, food products, boyfriends and clothes". This chapter has sought to analyse the specificities of subtitling for female audiences in the case study of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001). What it has revealed is that while explicitly offensive and sexually related language is frequently present in the film, the subtitles' choice tends to downgrade the explicitness of swearing and sexuality, taking the target culture into account. The historical, social and cultural contexts of the receiving culture serve to explain the type of translations which are applied (Santaemilia 2011, p. 23) in order to convey this chick flick to Chinese audiences.

In the rendering of swearing and sexuality, the Chinese subtitles moderate potentially taboo topics, offering them in a less offensive and much softer style. The transfer of sexuality and gender drawn from the Chinese subtitles of *Bridget Jones's Diary* thus resonates with the repositioning of gender identity in a Chinese context with its culturally appropriate forms. The subtitling of this film underlines the negotiation of cultural differences between women in different societies as films move between nations and languages. In Santaemilia's (2015, p. 6) words, translating sex and gender tends not only to involve "cross-cultural transfer" but a "cross-ideological" one. The intersection of translation and gender/sex in the meanwhile is both contradictory and multiple (Santaemilia 2015, p. 6) as gender and sexuality are transferred and mediated by state

ideological censorship. Although the Chinese subtitles clearly privilege comprehension in relation to sexuality and swearing, the shifting translational strategies either moderate or contradict explicitness on multiple levels to allow the film to resonate for Chinese female audiences. The Chinese subtitles make a gender and sexual transfer but they make it more contextually appropriate for the receiving culture. Ultimately, the chapter has presented a more complex projection of female gender identity in the Chinese subtitling process of *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001). This text has a female protagonist who attempts to break from "tradition" and move towards "modernity". My attempt is to deconstruct these discourses of tradition and modernity to understand what kinds of negotiations are undertaken by female characters when discussing the sensitive topics such as sexuality and swearing in the Chinese subtitles. Such an examination is useful at a time when the growing importance of female gender has increased within larger discourses where their identity as women has increased significance in a contemporary Chinese era.

## 6. Subtitling Comedy: The Transfer of Humour in the Chinese Subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999)

### 6.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the complexities of the screen translation of humour from English into Chinese, and to assess how translators have responded to these complexities by examining the Chinese subtitles of the film *Notting Hill* (1999). The perception of humour is a complex phenomenon as numerous critics/theorists have emphasised. Apart from its verbal and non-verbal humorous effects, humour is indeed a social and psychological experience within which certain subject matters may or may not elicit amusement (Schröter 2005, p. 75). Raskin Victor (1985, p. 16) argues that humour can be understood differently according to participants' social background. The understanding of some jokes and types of humour may possibly be restricted by target audiences' individual personality traits which may link to their linguistic or encyclopaedic knowledge, or the level of familiarity with the subject matter. These traits may act as a barrier to the accessibility of the humorous effects (Manca and Aprile 2014, p. 159). Delia Chiaro (2010b, p. 1) however observes that geographic boundaries, linguistic variations and cultural conventions supplement the comprehension of humour. Therefore, the humorous effect will be perceived differently from culture to culture. The structural, semantic and pragmatic differences between languages and cultures inevitably lead to complexities in the translation of humour (Bianchi 2014, pp. 477-478). Humorous effects based on both linguistic and cultural features are the most arduous instances of humour to translate (Chiaro 2010b, p. 5). This chapter will consider various types of humour at play in the film *Notting Hill*. It will also assess the barriers to specific types of humour in the subtitling of the film for a Chinese audience, evaluating the complexities of translating humour.

### 6.2. Theoretical Framework

In order to examine the complexities of humour in the subtitling process of the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999), Delia Chiaro and Piferi Roberta's (2010b) notion of "Verbally Expressed Humour" (VEH) will be considered as an initial point to locate humour

from the linguistic perspective. Chiaro and Roberta (2010b, p. 285) define VEH as “any verbal form of attempt to amuse”, whose translation is in turn defined as a task that “will naturally involve matching the linguistic ambiguity in the source language (SL) with similar ambiguity in the target language (TL) as well as finding solutions to culture-specific references pertaining to the culture of origin which are frequently involved in humorous tropes” (Chiaro 2010a, pp. 1-2). As a result of the complex nature of humour, this study moreover considers verbal humour and the conflation of verbal and non-verbal humour<sup>84</sup> but focuses on both verbal and visual elements as they appear in the vast majority of instances of humour in this study. The analysis will draw on the classification of humour proposed by Patrick Zabalbeascoa (1996) but it will give an additional emphasis to the question of context, a question Zabalbeascoa highlights but does not explore fully.

First of all, within the key literature on the classification of humour, this chapter highlights Zabalbeascoa’s (1996, pp. 251-254) four types of humour<sup>85</sup> that are relevant to this chapter. The first type of humour is the “international joke” or “binational joke”. This sort of joke “does not depend on either language-specific wordplay or familiarity with unknown specific aspects of the source culture” (Zabalbeascoa 1996, p. 251). Although the referent of such a joke is part of the source culture, the humorous effect is retained for the target reader by using imported/borrowed words. In other words, the referent of the humour is sufficiently recognisable by the target audience in context (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 217). To account for the important notion of *context*, I refer to Lawrence Venuti’s (2013, p. 180) argument in relation to the decontextualising effect inherent in the process of translation. He explains that translation inevitably involves removing a source text from the values, functions, traditions and social institutions of a national or linguistic context. This process of decontextualisation is then followed by a process of recontextualisation into the target culture to make contextual meaning.

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<sup>84</sup> Non-verbal mechanisms of communication that are exclusively dependent on visual perception will be excluded from the analysis because audiences would intuitively resort to the picture instead of the translation when visual humour occurs (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 227).

<sup>85</sup> Zabalbeascoa (1996, pp. 251-254) originally proposed six types of jokes. They are “international joke, national-culture-and-institutions joke, national-sense-of-humour joke, language-dependent joke, visual joke and complex joke”.

Secondly, Zabalbeascoa (1996, p. 252) proposes “national-culture-and-institutions jokes”<sup>86</sup> and “national-sense-of-humour jokes”<sup>87</sup>, because of the specificity of certain national jokes. The former type of joke would not be funny without an awareness of the required background knowledge in the culture of origin, while the latter can further specify that the apparent popularity of some jokes is bound up with certain traditions and an “intertextual frame of understanding” (Zabalbeascoa 1996, p. 252). I combine Zabalbeascoa’s above two categories into one: the national joke, because, in this study, these national jokes are clearly and recognisably dependent on foreign cultural references. The conflation of Zabalbeascoa’s two categories into one may simplify the culturally specific references in the case of the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* rather than complicating matters. These jokes rely upon concepts or objects peculiar to the source culture that may be unfamiliar to the receptor culture (Minutella 2014, p. 69). In tackling this type of culture-bound joke, adaptation is prioritised to recreate the entertaining effect (Zabalbeascoa 1996, p. 252).

Thirdly, “language-dependent jokes” depend on “features of natural language for their effect, e.g. polysemy (a word or phrase has more than one meaning), but have to be differently understood in different contexts” (Zabalbeascoa 1996, p. 253). This type of joke also falls under Chiaro’s (2010b) concept of “Verbally Expressed Humour” when it is mediated linguistically to interpret puns in wordplay in order to elicit humour. Joseph Addison (1982, p. 343) argues, as the lowest level of humour, puns are regarded as untranslatable as they use homophones which agree in sound but differ in meaning. Chiaro (2004, p. 37) further argues that in the generation of puns, it is highly unlikely that two languages share similarity in the same homophonous, homonymous or polysemous items (Chiaro 2004, p. 37).

Finally, yet importantly, “the complex joke” is the combination of the above-mentioned three types of humour (I refer to Zabalbeascoa’s above three types of humour as I have conflated “national-culture-and-institutions jokes” and “national-sense-of-humour jokes”

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<sup>86</sup> *National-culture-and-institutions jokes* focus on an institution or other culture-bound reference that is unheard of in the target culture (Zabalbeascoa, 1996: 235-257).

<sup>87</sup> *National-sense-of-humour jokes* specifically refer to the fact that in the perception of certain types of humour, “some communities may depend on culture, religion or historical and political connections with neighbouring nations” (Zabalbeascoa, 1996: 235-257).

into one: the national joke). The complex joke occurs within a text embedded with two or more of the above international, national and linguistic features (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 228).

The humour taxonomy discussed above cannot encompass all the complexities of context in the Chinese subtitles in the case of *Notting Hill* (1999). This chapter, in its case study, seeks to explore more fully the question of context, a question raised but not fully explored by Zabalbeascoa. Jokes in isolation from the context of use will not be considered<sup>88</sup> in this study. As Venuti (2013, p. 181) argues, *triple context* should be considered in translation to produce an intelligent and interesting rewriting for the receiving culture:

The first is intratextual and therefore constitutive of the source text, of its linguistic patterns and discursive structures, its verbal texture. The second is intertextual (in the sense of relations to pre-existing texts) and interdiscursive (in the sense of relations to pre-existing forms and themes) yet equally constitutive, since it comprises the network of linguistic relations that endows the source text with significance for readers who have read widely in the source language. The third, which is also constitutive but at once intertextual, interdiscursive, and intersemiotic, is the context of reception, the various media through which the source text continues to accrue significance when it begins to circulate in its originary culture, ranging from editorial decisions like typography, trim size, and binding to jacket blurbs, author photos, and advertisements to periodical reviews, academic criticism, and internet blogs to different editions, anthology extracts, and adaptations of various kinds (dramatic, film, comic strip).

These three layers of context should be considered as they enable comprehensive interpretation across cultures. In order to accommodate the complexities in transferring humour from the source text to the target culture in the case study of the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill*, the chapter thus considers context in amplified form in relation to Zabalbeascoa's existing categories to analyse the significance of context. Comic effect is heavily dependent on context and cannot deliver the information containing humorous effect or the associated feelings of exhilaration, unless the context in question is received by spectators who are exposed to instances which are mediated linguistically and culturally by means of subtitling. In other words, expressing humour in the context of a particular situation where the linguistic and cultural transfer is made across cultures can be counted as contextual humour. If the language-specific wordplay or familiarity with

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<sup>88</sup> Addressing jokes that are out of context does not mean that humorous effect can be achieved without considering context. Rather, it is an attempt to make some progress by not discussing simultaneously all the complex factors involved in interpreting humorous effect (Ritchie 2000, p. 2).

unknown specific aspects of the source culture is removed from the context under discussion, the humorous effect will disappear substantially. Without the context, the discussed examples are plain and colourless, hardly with humorous effect.

In this chapter, contextual humour includes three subcategories: contextually cultural humour, contextually linguistic humour and contextually cultural and linguistic humour. These three types of humour are related to culture and linguistics and their combination. They further specify different foci of the contextual humour, especially in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999). Zabalbeascoa's (1996) classification underlines specificities of international, national and linguistic jokes while this chapter considers the importance of context throughout and has a particular focus on linguistic and cultural factors in context to analyse the humour transfer. These two sets of classification are complementary and convey the complexities of verbal and visual humour present in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999). As shown below, Figure 1.1 will illustrate contextual humour and its threefold subcategory.

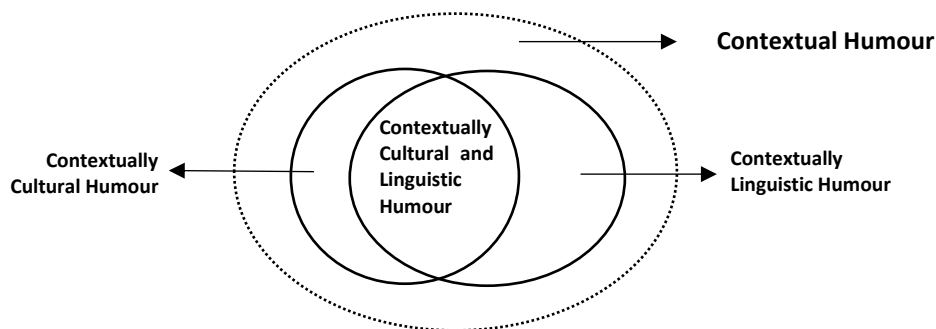


Figure 4 - Contextual Humour and Its Three Subcategories

Figure 4 underlines that there is a clear overlap between the three subtypes of contextual humour. It is a conflation of contextual cultural humour and contextual linguistic humour: contextually cultural and linguistic humour. In other words, key to the process of transferring humour in context are linguistic and cultural elements. In a broader sense, all the instances of humour drawn from the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* can be considered as contextual humour and this study in particular focuses on linguistic and cultural forces involved in interpreting contextual humorous effect. The categories will be



defined respectively and the significance and relationships among these categories will be explained. Subsequently, examples will be grouped according to the taxonomy.

The first sub-type is **contextually cultural humour**, which can only be perceived from culturally conveyed information in context. This type of humour is slightly different from Zabalbeascoa's (1996, p. 252) "national-culture-and-institutions jokes" and "national-sense-of-humour jokes" because contextually cultural humour is equally cultural-oriented and contextually based, while Zabalbeascoa's (1996, p. 252) nationally related joke is heavily dependent on nationally loaded references and specificities. Contextually cultural humour is broader than Zabalbeascoa's national humour, potentially encompassing language blocks and other cultural coagulants.

The second sub-type: **contextually linguistic humour**, which is developed from Zabalbeascoa's (1996, p. 253) classification of "language-dependent joke", is an attempt to include linguistic elements as well as contextual interpretation. To understand the context, the chapter analyses the setting of the scene, the characters' facial expressions, attitudes, and personalities, etc. The contextual force supplements the linguistic factors to comprehend the subtlety of the humour generation process. This type of humour can be substantiated by Marta Mateo's (2010, p. 181) argument that the verbal distortions in the texts are not funny in themselves but only become so when considered as a whole. The humorous impact does not depend on the strength of single words; it is an integral part of the contextual and linguistic devices which interact with each other rather than working in isolation (Nash 1985, p. 23).

Last but not least, we have the combination of the above two subcategories: **the contextually cultural and linguistic humour** that focuses on both cultural and linguistic characteristics in context. As far as the cultural and linguistic factors are concerned, instances of humour may be better understood by target viewers. The contextual meaning not only refers to the structures of discourse itself but also the situational, societal, political and cultural aspects involved in interpreting text (Van Dijk 2006, p. 161).

In order to tackle the difficulties of the above complexities in transferring humour across cultures, Chiaro (2004) proposes the translation of VEH that provides feasible solutions.

She suggests translators tend to adopt the following two key strategies<sup>89</sup> when encountering challenges deriving from technical and linguistic constraints between cultures (2004, p. 42):

- (1) The substitution of VEH in the Source Language with an example of VEH in the Target Language;
- (2) The replacement of the Source Language VEH with an idiomatic expression in the Target Language.

According to Elena Manca and Daesy Aprile (2014, p. 159), Chiaro's first solution is used regularly in the translation of VEH to find corresponding words, which tend to be ambiguous owing to cultural disparities but with equal comic effect between different languages. Though translators face challenges when no similarity in linguistic or sociocultural knowledge is found between source and target culture (Chiaro 2004, p. 37), the majority of translators opt for substitution with a semantically ambiguous text (Chiaro 2004, p. 38). Furthermore, the notion of untranslatability<sup>90</sup> refers more to the impossibility of formal and functional equivalence rather than the inaccessibility of substituting humour with a semantically similar text that works equally appropriately in the target culture (Chiaro, 2004:37; 2005:136). However, the untranslatable inevitably leads to the creation of a new wordplay of humorous expression, and the innovative change of word also easily causes consequences at the expense of jocular effect of the original (Manca and Aprile 2014, p. 159). When moving from the spoken medium to the written one, the translation strategy of simplification is recurrently used to aid viewers' reading comprehension (Caimi 2009, p. 241). The transfer of humour is not only confined to the shift from verbal code to written code where information loss inevitably takes place (Chiaro 2004, p. 41), but also to cultural disparity in the perception of humour (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2014, p. 222).

The second solution of Chiaro's VEH preserves the SL humorous instances with an idiomatic expression in the TL. A high level of creativity is required to locate idiomatic

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<sup>89</sup> Chiaro (2004, p. 42) identifies three translational strategies that are more common for translators to adopt when translating VEH. This study merely selects the first two as they are closely relevant to the case in terms of strategies employed in subtitling humour. The last strategy proposed by Chiaro is: "The replacement of the Source Language VEH with an example of VEH in the Target Language elsewhere in the text".

<sup>90</sup> Some terms are frequently left untranslated in cultural transfer as its transferred process is constantly subject to mistranslation and retranslation when translators have unsure knowledge (Apter, 2010: 50-63).

expressions in the TL in order to preserve the play on words and the humorous effect (Manca and Aprile 2014, p. 159). According to Rosa Canós (1999, p. 462), in the transfer of humour, cultural adaptation can be used to detect domestic expressions with equivalents in the target culture. Furthermore, Juan Sierra (2006, pp. 219-210) argues that the search for functional equivalence may lead to the adoption of domesticating solutions in humorous audiovisual texts to retain comical effect<sup>91</sup>. By using idiomatic expressions in the target culture, translators thus provide readers with fluent rendering (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, p. 88). Considering the above solutions to translate VEH, this chapter aims to analyse the transfer of humour to Chinese culture by exploring the ways in which British culture is mediated via Chinese culture in the subtitling process. The following section considers the reception of the film in Britain and China.

### 6.3. *Notting Hill* (1999) in the British and Chinese Contexts

Released in the United Kingdom on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1999, *Notting Hill* is an Anglophone romantic comedy set in an affluent district, Notting Hill, in West London (IMDb 1999). The location of the film is Notting Hill's Portobello Road street market, one of London's top ten tourist attractions. The film explores how a beautiful and famous American actress, Anna Scott (played by Julia Roberts), and an ordinary and self-deprecatory British bookstore owner, William Thacker (played by Hugh Grant), fall in love with the whole world watching (Ebert 1999). This film appealed to a wide audience domestically and internationally, and was a record-breaking success in Britain (News 1999). *Screen International* reports that the film had taken £168 million at box offices worldwide (News 1999) and approximately £31 million in the UK (Dyja 2010, p. 263). Ian Nathan, editor of the film magazine *Empire*, identifies two key reasons for the success of the film: Firstly, the film is built on the previous triumph of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994)<sup>92</sup>, appealing to the mainstream and mass audience; secondly, the film also contains elements of wish fulfilment of an ordinary man encountering a movie star (News 1999). If the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) does not serve as a basis for success in China, *Notting Hill's* wish

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<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the questions regarding the foreignisation/domestication dichotomy have also been considered in the translation of humour from an intercultural perspective (Sierra 2014: 312).

<sup>92</sup> Hugh Grant also starred in *Four Wedding and A Funeral* (1994), which was made by the same production team (News, 1999a). For details on the film's production team, see footnote 98.

fulfilment is a core human theme which resonates, in subtitled form, for a Chinese audience.

The Chinese subtitled version of *Notting Hill* was released six months after the English version of the film, on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1999 (Zhou 1999). The Douban Movie<sup>93</sup> website underlines the film's popularity in China, revealing that over 161,994 viewers rated it as meriting 7.9 out of 10 (Douban Movie 1999). Although classified as a romantic comedy, this film also taps into the combined category of romance and comedy (Douban Movie 1999). The reviewers voted this film predominantly better than other imports in the same category (Douban Movie 1999). Moreover, the box office of the Chinese subtitled version of *Notting Hill* reached nearly £2 million with nearly 100,000 viewers watching it during its opening weekend (Zhou 1999). Interestingly, the film is perceived antithetically in the UK and China in relation to the way in which it develops its themes. British reviews focus more on the ordinary man meeting the famous girl (News 1999; Street 2002, p. 213) while the Chinese market gives priority to the other side, highlighting the role of the independent girl who finds success in her career and romance despite the obstacles (Cheng 2013, p. 104). The film is set in the early 1990s when Britain was facing industrial conflict and the collapse of old industries (Leonard 1997, p. 70). Britain's economic power and cultural influence were in recession. Consequently, the British government sought urgent social, political and economic revival in the 1990s in order to maintain national identity (Driver and Martell 2006, p. 10). The film might thus be seen as an encouragement for people to regalanise excitement around British core values as a democratic and free society in an interconnected world, linking pride in the past with self-confidence in the future (Leonard 1997, p. 70). *Notting Hill* (1999) promisingly portrays Britain as a place where "an ordinary person's dreams can come true" (Brooks 1998, p. 3). As a result, the film is capable of suggesting a possible renewal of British identity by representing British middle-class values and modes of conduct (Mather 2006, p. 167).

In contrast, *Notting Hill* is particularly appealing to Chinese female audiences based on two factors. Firstly, according to Yu Zhou (1999), it largely caters for women's ambition

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<sup>93</sup> Douban Movie is one of the most popular websites that promotes films in China. Through the website, subscribers are able to rate listed films and leave feedback. According to these data, the film industry thus receives key feedback regarding the popularity of certain films from Chinese people (Mao 2014, p. 6).

for achieving success in both their professional life and in their love life. The female lead character, Anna Scott, has a strong personality as well as an unshakable faith in her dreams and the possibility of finding true love (Cheng 2013, p. 104). She may motivate female audiences in China who may take her as a role model in reality. She succeeds in the entertainment industry and meets her true love against all odds (Ebert 1999). Lin Cheng (2013, p. 104) argues, Anna's positive, courageous and inspiring attitude towards life and romantic relationship, may encourage Chinese women to live boldly and well. Secondly, *Notting Hill* (1999) underlines that women may be the dominant partner in a romantic relationship (Cheng 2013, p. 104). The film frequently offers a celebration<sup>94</sup> of the power of the female protagonist (Cheng 2013, p. 104). *Notting Hill*, in its exploration of female authority, resonates particularly with the state support for the cultural changes regarding gender equality which have taken place in China during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary eras<sup>95</sup>. Furthermore, the first Institute of Women's Studies was founded by the National Women's Federation in 1983<sup>96</sup>. This research body seeks ways to protect women's benefits by providing references to the policymakers in the federation, particularly on topics such as women's employment and issues of family and marriage (Li and Zhang 1994, p. 141). As a result of the creation of this discipline of women's studies, the increasing awareness of the social significance of women's rights can be seen in the male-dominated society (Li and Zhang 1994, p. 150). This contemporary and historical debate on the role of women in China might be seen to offer a fertile forum into which to release a subtitled version of *Notting Hill*.

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<sup>94</sup> See Lisa Rofel (1999, p. 43) for further consideration on the construction and productivity of gender identities in the Chinese modern era.

<sup>95</sup> By the first decades of the twentieth century, the Chinese authorities began to monitor the growing women's right movements (Johnson 2009, p. 2). The developments relating to women's freedoms and family reform can be traced from the earliest day of the founding of the People's Republic of China (Johnson 2009, p. 3). The All-China Democratic Women's Federation was formed at the first National Congress of Chinese Women held on March 24<sup>th</sup> to April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1949, in Beijing which marks the organisation of Chinese women since 1949 (Snow, 2004:69). Though preference for male employee continues in both urban and rural enterprises, female participation in the collective sector has been reinforced by political intervention (Hershatter et al. 1985, p. 573). The Chinese Communist Party has made a clear attempt at addressing the problem of gender equality, by supporting "a conjugal family based on gender equality, mutual love and free choice" (Johnson 2009, p. 29). However, related issues for Chinese women, like choosing one's marriage partner and freedom to not marry, are constrained by social norms that limit interaction between the sexes and by continuing deference to parental opinion in a patriarchal and patrilineal society (Hershatter et al. 1985, p. 572).

<sup>96</sup> The Women's Federation is the only legitimate women's organisation in China (Li and Zhang 1994, p. 140).

To sum up, different receptions of the film have been shaped by two parallel forces in the UK and China. The first force is Britain's attempt to (re)gain self-confidence, with the ultimate goal to regain its national power. The second force is the pursuit of women's liberation for the Chinese market. These forces interact differently in the source and target culture. The film may fit into development relating to gender equality in China. From a wider perspective, reactions to the film underline different ideological contexts in both countries.

#### 6.4. Justification of the Case Study

Comedy is regarded as one of the most popular genres in British cinema, playing a crucial role in sustaining the film industry in times of economic slump in the 1920s and 1970s, and most importantly, engaging with economic and social issues (Hunter and Porter 2012, p. 1). During the 1990s, Britain produced films for an international audience in this genre as comedy and drama largely and significantly appeal to the world (Mather 2006, p. 1). These films were often romantic comedies that explore the relationships and courtship patterns of young couples in contemporary British society (Mather 2006, p. 119). The massive success of the British romantic comedy can be explained by the genre's ability to please or satisfy audiences through the symbolic "victory of arbitrary plot over consistency of character" (Frye 1957, p. 170).

Among one of the most influential representatives of British romantic comedy (Mather 2006, p. 118), *Notting Hill* (1999) has been chosen as the case study for this chapter. With its two high-profile actors, Julia Roberts, and Hugh Grant, *Notting Hill* (1999) is assessed very differently in gender terms in the Anglophone context. Eddie Dyja (2010, p. 266) describes the film as a successfully constructed male fantasy in which failing Brits fall for the extraordinary, rich Americans. Substantial analyses of *Notting Hill* (1999) have been carried out with regard to the representation of class, English identity, the deployment of the fairy tale, the performance of comedy and the significance of romance (Leggott 2010, p. 185). The British cultural context is particularly pronounced in *Notting Hill*. Two key elements which make this film a very British romantic comedy are its iconographies of Britain, covering modernity and heritage, and its Englishness, an attempt to affirm a sense of national identity (Higson 2011, p. 82). Moreover, the film's humour makes clear

reference to its British context (Mukherjee et al. 2001, p. 7), which is the main focus of this chapter. An additional reason for selecting this film is because of its hybrid, multi-layered humour and complex intertextuality.

The following sections will consider how Chiaro's (2004) translation strategies of VEH applies to the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999). Although Chiaro argues that the translation strategy of substitution is a less satisfying solution (Chiaro 2004, p. 43), the Chinese subtitler at times opts precisely for substitution as a sensible solution in dealing with the culture-based references. Debra Raphaelson-West (1989, p. 128) argues that the preference for substitution stems from its ability to preserve the humorous effect unlike adopting explanation and/or awkward language as they equate to sacrificing the dramatic effect. This chapter also explores the way in which the humour is transferred for a contemporary Chinese audience through the mediation of culture. Three research questions are proposed to accomplish these objectives:

- (1) Why did the Chinese authorities select this film to be subtitled?
- (2) How are culturally bound elements of humour treated in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999)?
- (3) How does British humour transfer to Chinese culture given the linguistic, cultural and historical barriers between China and Britain?

## 6.5. Humour Translation in *Notting Hill* (1999)

Based on the proposed classification, key examples will be grouped to illustrate the complexities of transferring humour in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999). Each example will also be related back to the above research questions to analyse how the cultural references are treated in the subtitles, and which translation strategies are used to make the cultural elements accessible to the audience. This section will embark on the macro category, contextual humour, followed by its three parallel subcategories.

### 6.5.1. Contextual Humour

From a logical point of view, contextual humour does cover all varieties of its subcategories. However, according to the specificities and complexities of this text-

oriented analysis in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill*. Contextual humour at times works mainly because of the contextual coherence of the film plot, not directly linked to any linguistic or cultural features. Therefore, it is worth investigating how contextual humour is translated for the receiving culture. This section considers the analysis of contextual humour via five key norms in context. In the first example of “Cookie Monster”, Zabalbeascoa’s “international joke” is also used to facilitate the understanding of contextual humour in question.

**Example 1 Contextual Humour: Cookie Monster**

(1) *Description of the Scene: There is a barbershop in Notting Hill. One client comes out of the barbershop with a funny hairstyle. Her appearance resembles a famous puppet, Cookie Monster, from the popular children’s television programme Sesame Street.*

(2) *Screen Shot:*



Screen Shot -15 - A Cookie-Monster-Like Customer

(3) *Line: WILLIAM: The radical hair-dresser where everyone comes out looking like the Cookie Monster, whether they want it or not...*

(4) *Translation: 那家新潮发廊里出来的顾客  
个个都像曲奇怪兽  
无论情愿还是不情愿*

(5) *Back Translation: WILLIAM: Customers come out of the fashionable hair-dresser looking like Quqi monster whether they like it or not.*



*Cookie Monster* is the key phrase in this case where one of Zabalbeascoa's (1996, p. 251) humorous types, "the international joke", assists the Chinese subtitles to convey humour. *Cookie Monster* is a well-known character in Chinese culture. The subtitles are able therefore to transliterate the name, as it is already in cultural use in China. *Cookie Monster*, as a figure clearly taps into the category of international jokes. It stems from the children's television programme *Sesame Street* for preschool-aged children aiming both to entertain and to develop their intellectual and cultural acquisition (Ball 1970, p. 2). For pedagogic reasons, the Chinese authorities imported this show in 1983 and it was a massive success because this "fun education" show also inserted Chinese idioms in the programme to educate children (Keane 2002, p. 10).

Regardless of the *Cookie Monster's* origin<sup>97</sup>, the cultural way in which William points out this connection is what makes this an instance of British humour. Humour stems from the claim that the customers who come out of the barbershop, look ridiculously like *Cookie Monster*. The Chinese imagery, because of its international source, is able to preserve the humour of the British film. The Chinese subtitles, via the transliteration of cookie: "曲奇"/"Quqi", underline the same imagery of the original as the audiences are aware of the cartoon character and are able to make the humorous connection, a connection with people's messy hairstyle and the *Cookie Monster's* funny appearance. This example underlines the composite that is humour in national terms at times. The above consideration of contextual elements has rationalised the classification under "contextual humour". The familiarity of the widely distributed puppet is built into the translation through the approach of transliteration and replication. The humorous effect is maintained because the target audience has already grown familiar with such a famous puppet with its exaggerated facial expression and messy appearance. The translator thus opts for transliteration and replication to remind the audience of the connection between the well-known appeal of this popular puppet and the underlining humour in context.

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<sup>97</sup> It is to be noted though that this example is not an instance of British humour since the character at its core, *Cookie Monster*, is recognisably North American: what the *Cookie Monster* thus underlines though is that British humour, or at least elements of it, are themselves international, as Zabalbeascoa's humorous type, "the international joke" suggests. The subtitles translate not just British culture but the presence of American culture within Britain.

*Example 2 Contextual Humour: Small Nuclear Devices*

(1) *Description of the Scene: William and Anna, the two main characters in this film, are in love with each other. At first, William rejects Anna's confession of love. But he soon changes his mind to accept Anna's love and all of his friends urgently help him to find Anna.*

(2) *Line: WILLIAM: Max, how fast is your car?*

.....

*MAX: If anyone gets in our way  
we have small nuclear devices.*

(3) *Translation: 麦克斯 你的车有多快?*

.....

*-如果有人敢挡道  
咱们就用核武器轰他*

(4) *Back Translation: WILLIAM: Maikesi, how fast is your car?*

.....

*MAX: If anyone dares to get in our way.  
we will use nuclear weapons to blow him up.*

“Nuclear devices” is the key phrase in this case where hyperbole is used to express a determination and urgency to meet with Anna. Humour stems in particular from the use of “small” to describe weapons whose impact can never truly be small. The humour of “small nuclear devices” works for the British context due to the use of exaggeration mixed with British understatement: the addition “small” to “nuclear devices”. Without the contextualisation, no humorous effect is maintained as nuclear devices are produced for military uses (Ferguson et al. 2004, p. 3) with no comic connotation. Such explanation supports the significance of context to the humour and this instance is completely dependent on contextualisation that makes the joke fall into the category of “contextual humour”. It is of note that the Chinese subtitles omit the word “small”. They amplify the violence of the original, specifying that they would “用核武器轰他” (“use nuclear weapons to blow him up”). This amplification of violence runs counter to the social need for developing harmony in a collective and peaceful society which is deeply rooted in

Chinese tradition, and such harmony is also in line with the overall Confucian philosophy (Hui 2005, p. 18). The violence, however, augments the humorous effect in this context for the Chinese audience as it produces an extra layer of violence that has built from the original emergency. Humour is maintained in the Chinese subtitles which still depict the use of massive powerful weapons for a “small” everyday occurrence. However, in the omission of the very British use of “small”, the subtitles make clear the very different cultural context for which they are destined. As Venuti (2013, p. 181) suggests, translators do not simply render words and phrases, but also establish culturally specific meanings. The Chinese here is colloquial and offers a more direct and violent determination and urgency in a way which is not present in the English “we have small nuclear devices”. Even though such expression is clearly against Confucian philosophy in relation to harmony, the contextual humour is successfully preserved in the Chinese subtitles by foregrounding the comically violent effect.

Example 3 and 4 Contextual Humour: Cooking the Books and a Wet Rag

(1) *Description of the Scene: Martin is the only employee in William’s bookshop and he is trying to remind his boss about a special delivery. It is from Anna. William is fed up with Martin’s repeated reminder.*

(2) *Line: MARTIN: Uh, I-I do hate to disturb you whilst you're cooking the books, but, uh, there's a delivery for you.*

*WILLIAM: Martin, really. Can't you just do it yourself?*

*MARTIN: But you see, this is not for the shop. This is for you.*

*WILLIAM: Right. Okay. Tell me, if I were to employ a wet rag, would I have to pay it as much as I pay you?*

(3) *Translation: 你算账的时候*

*我真不愿意打扰你*

*但是前面有人送东西来给你*

*-马丁 真是的*

*你就不能接收一下吗?*

*-不是给书店送书来的*

*是给你个人的*

-好吧

你说说要是你什么都干不了

我付你那么多钱干嘛？

(4) *Back Translation: MARTIN: I really don't want to bother you*

*while you are working out accounts*

*But there's a delivery for you.*

*WILLIAM: Come on, Mading.*

*Can you just receive it?*

*MARTIN: It's not any book for the bookshop.*

*It's for you.*

*WILLIAM: Ok.*

*You tell me, why should I pay you so much money*

*if you are unable to do anything.*

The phrase “cooking the books” underlines another instance of contextual humour. It refers to “fraudulent activities performed by corporations in order to falsify their financial statements” (Investopedia 2016). The phrase has a long and particular British history. It was in common use in English by the eighteenth century as Tobias Smollett's (1964) *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*. 1751, makes clear: "Some falsified printed accounts, artfully cooked up, on purpose to mislead and deceive." William is actually busy honestly working out the accounts of his bookstore while Martin teases William about his futile efforts which makes no profit at all in the bookshop. The Chinese subtitles add an extra layer of meaning on top of rendering Martin's teasing and underestimation. They render it as “算账的时候”/ “working out accounts” that includes two possible meanings. Firstly, it relates to the actual work of doing accounts; secondly, it refers to finding out who and what is to blame (“找人算账”/ “to have an account to settle with sb”) (*C-E Dictionary*). Humour is generated by Martin's act of mocking when William is so focused on the accounts of his bookstore. Martin's teasing functions differently in the English (doing fake accounts) and Chinese contexts (finding out who and what is to blame). There is thus a humorous gain by this twofold meaning in the Chinese context which it is not present in the original. However, there is also translation loss relating specifically to the history and very British contextual use of “to cook the books”.

Another instance of contextual humour, “to employ a wet rag” underlines a starkly different approach in the film’s dialogue. The phrase is used to underline William’s attitude towards his “useless” employee, Martin. The English slang “a wet rag” refers to someone ineffective (*OED*). However, the Chinese subtitles remove the cultural image and instead explain its metaphorical meaning. They explain it as “什么都干不了” / “to be unable to do anything” with the loss of the cultural image, direct colloquial insult in the contextual humour. As Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael (2014, p. 222) argue, without considering the contextual feature of the language, a communicatively significant confrontation is no longer obtained. The British contextual image, “a wet rag”, cannot be transposed meaningfully into a Chinese context and is therefore simply explained in order that communication be maintained. It is interesting to note that how William employs “wet rag” in this context is in its literal sense, rather than using it metaphorically, but drawing on the audience’s familiarity with the metaphorical meaning.

As shown in this instance, a simple explication does not replicate the original desired humorous effect for the Chinese audience. This translation is not able to recontextualise in terms of its specific imagery. The subtitlers’ response to the next contextual humorous instance concerning “vague food crisis” shows an application of replication adding key information and treats the issue as something descriptive rather than humorous.

#### Example 5 Contextual Humour: Vague Food Crisis

(1) *Description of the Scene: William’s friends and relatives are celebrating Honey’s (William’s sister) birthday, and realise that the chicken is badly cooked.*

(2) *Line: MAX: Oh, Christ!*

*What is going on in there?*

*Oh, God!*

*Hi. Come on in.*

*Vague food crisis.*

*BELLA: Hiya! Sorry.*

*The guinea-fowl is proving  
more complicated than expected.*

(3) *Translation: 天哪 这里怎么了?*

可恶

快进来 发生了点

小小的食品危机

-你们好

看来烤鸡对他来说太难了

(4) *Back Translation: MAX: Heaven ah (Tian Ah) what's going on in here?*

*Bad luck.*

*Quickly come on it Here has a little*

*small small food crisis.*

*BELLA: Hello there.*

*It seems that roasting chicken is too difficult for him.*

The humour in this example again stems from a very British use of conflicting, even antithetical words in combination. "Crisis" is defined as "a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or for worse is imminent; now applied especially to times of difficulty, insecurity, and suspense in politics or commerce" (*OED*). Crisis refers to a huge, catastrophic large-scale situation. The drama of the word is made comic by its juxtaposition with the word "vague" which undercuts the very crisis it announces. Moreover, humour stems from the use of the word "crisis", a word used to describe wars, famines and financial crashes, to describe overcooking chicken. The humorous effect in this example derives from the replacement of the general perception of crisis in social, economic, political or international affairs with the awkward food-related issue, the guinea-fowl. The joke relies heavily on the context within the urgent situation of burning food. However, the Chinese subtitles add "小小的" / "small small" to replicate in Chinese the clash of contextually opposing words. Interestingly, where in the previous example "small" is removed from "nuclear devices" to produce humorous effect in a more humorous and violent style than that of the original, in this food crisis context, a dual "small" is added to moderate and mediate the urgent situation.

In summary, what the Chinese subtitles in relation to contextual humour have revealed is that the subtitles work better if they take the contextual meaning into account. Otherwise, without the consideration of the process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation

(Venuti 2013, p. 180), a process replacing relations to the source culture with a receiving intertext, in which the translating language and culture are built into the translation (Venuti 2013, p. 181), the Chinese subtitles will largely lose the humorous effect, as we have seen in the examples of “to employ a wet rag” and “vague food crisis”. In contrast, once the intertextual relation is actively made, the translation speaks to a receiving culture (Venuti 2013, p. 181) so that the desirable humorous effect is achieved, as we have seen in the examples of “small nuclear devices” and “cooking the books”.

#### 6.5.2.1. Contextually Cultural Humour

Contextually cultural humour will subsequently be analysed in relation to cultural elements in the contextual setting to bring about a funny effect as the key norm “style guru” will exemplify.

##### Example 6 Contextually Cultural Humour: Guru

(1) *Description of the Scene: William brings a superstar, Anna Scott, as his date for Honey’s birthday party. Her presence astonishes everybody. At the end of the party, Honey invites Anna to go shopping with her as she knows a lot of nice but cheap places. Anna humorously responds to her invitation.*

(2) *Line: HONEY: Ring me if you want someone*

*to go shopping with.*

*I know lots of nice, cheap places,*

*not that money necessarily...*

*It was just so nice to meet you.*

*ANNA: Happy birthday. You're my style guru.*

(3) *Translation: 如果想买东西 打电话给我*

*我知道好多价廉物美的地方*

*我知道你不在乎钱*

*很高兴认识你*

*-生日快乐 你是我的时尚指导*

(4) *Back Translation:*

*HONEY: Call me if you want to buy something.*

*I know so many places that are of excellent quality but at reasonable price.*

*I know that you don't care about the money.*

*Very nice to meet you.*

*ANNA: Happy birthday you are my fashion instructor.*

In Anna's response to Honey's excitement of meeting a celebrity and even inviting her to shop, contextually cultural humour takes place when she replies with a cultural reference, (style) "guru" in an ironic and exaggerated way. What entertains the audience here is the exaggeration when Anna responds to Honey's enthusiastic offer, helping a superstar to dress up. The word "guru" originally is a culturally-loaded reference referring to "a Hindu spiritual teacher or head of a religious sect" (*OED*). The culturally contextual humour reflects Zabalbeascoa's (1996, p. 252) "national-sense-of-humour jokes" as it also requires "a kind of tradition or intertextual frame of understanding" to maintain the hilarious reaction for a target audience.

Moreover, this term currently circulates in a culturally unspecific way because it is widely used across European languages as an expert in a certain area which is not directly linked to its Hindu origin. Regardless of this term's less known cultural origin, its cultural specificities and contextual importance still stand out and tap into the category of "contextually cultural humour". Chinese audiences are unaware of the cultural reference. It is interesting to note that both the English and Chinese contexts remove "guru" from its Indian cultural origin but in graphic forms, English preserves the phrase while in the Chinese subtitles' choice, they substitute the phrase with the gain of a partial humorous effect of the original. In order to address this type of national joke, the subtitler carries out substitution to interpret it in a similar way, rendering it as "时尚指导" / "fashion instructor" for the understanding of the target culture. Although part of the humorous effect is maintained in terms of meaning, the exaggeration is not. This instance implies that substitution can be employed in order to explain the contextual humour when cultural elements occur, but the outcome is not always satisfying. The subtitler's choice of contextually cultural humour underlines that equivalence is partially possible when talking about culturally related concept of "guru". It is sometimes difficult to transfer the ironic and exaggerated expression to which the original humour is attached through mere substitution.



### 6.5.2.2. Contextually Linguistic Humour

This section explores the contextual and linguistic forces that play a significant role in the comprehension of verbal and visual humour. It does so in relation to four key expressions in the film: “nymphomaniac”, “git” “demi-cappu” and “Pandora’s box” respectively.

#### Example 7 Contextually Linguistic Humour: Nymphomaniac

(1) *Description of the Scene: William’s friends set up some blind dates for him. A girl is introduced to him in an exaggerated and humorous way.*

(2) *Line: MAX: Her name is Tessa.*

*She works in the Contracts Department.*

*The hair, I admit,*

*is unfashionably frizzy,*

*but she’s bright as a button and kisses*

*like a nymphomaniac on death row.*

(3) *Translation: 她叫泰莎 是合同部的*

*我知道她的发型是像*

*上过电椅一样*

*不过她开朗大方*

*她的吻热情似火*

(4) *Back Translation: MAX: She is Taisha from contracts department.*

*I know her hairstyle is like*

*having been electrified*

*but she is cheerful and carries herself with ease and confidence*

*Her kiss is like the fire of enthusiasm.*

Humour is generated in this example from Max’s attempt to sell an unattractive female to William on the basis of her sexual enthusiasm and appetite. The Chinese subtitles maintain the unattractiveness of the female in question, rendering “unfashionably frizzy” as “上过电椅一样” / “like having been electrified”. They neutralise some of the humour of the original by lessening the inappropriateness of the English simile. The English dialogue states that Tessa “kisses like a nymphomaniac on death row”. The Chinese

subtitles mediate this phrase. “Nymphomaniac” is defined as “a woman who has abnormally excessive and uncontrollable sexual desire” (*OED*). The word is widely used to discuss what is regarded as sexually abnormal behaviour. In terms of form, the word is composed of two parts: “nympho” and “maniac”, and the latter part denotes “suffers from mental diseases” (*OED*). The humour in English language use of “nymphomaniac” in relation to someone trying to set up a blind date speaks for the British context in an exaggerated way to tempt William in a way which his potential date has a strong sexual desire. The Chinese subtitles eradicate the use of “nymphomaniac”, substituting it with an image which suggests passion but passion exerted within acceptable boundaries: “她的吻热情似火” / “Her kiss is like the fire of enthusiasm”. The Chinese subtitles offer a simile but it is one whose sexuality has been toned down. The English dialogue focuses entirely on excess, generating humour precisely from that excess. Tessa is not only a “nymphomaniac”, she is, according to Max, “like a nymphomaniac on death row”, a “nymphomaniac” desperate to satisfy her urges one last time. “Death row” has no immediate purchase in a British context as the country no longer has the death penalty. The image works for a British audience because Britain used to have a death penalty. Although China does have the death penalty but the Chinese subtitles choose not to refer to such execution. There is also contextual loss in the rendering the phrase “bright as a button”. The English phrase refers to someone quick witted and intelligent, yet the Chinese subtitles render this as “开朗大方” / “to be cheerful and carry oneself with ease and confidence”. They offer a different vision of this female’s capacities. The dialogue remains contextually humorous but the Chinese subtitles have moderated the humorous exaggeration of the source in order to comply with the social conventions of contemporary China.

Intriguingly, amateur Chinese subtitles adopt a different approach to this line. An unofficial Chinese subtitled version of *Notting Hill* (1999) is available from the popular film website (<http://www.dytt8.net/>) where amateur translators volunteer to produce translations for recently released foreign audiovisual products. It is difficult to trace the subtitler’s name and the date on which the translation was produced. One specific unauthorised version (<http://www.ygdy8.com/html/gndy/jddy/20091109/22785.html>) maintains more of the English excess. It renders the English source, “like a nymphomaniac

on death row” as “像是死囚区的慕男狂”/ “like man-admiring maniac on death row”. The simile is closer to the humorous exaggeration of the source but it is still of note that it still softens it slightly. Tessa is a maniac for men in this version and not explicitly for sex. Cultural mediation therefore is visible even in the unauthorised subtitles.

Example 8 Contextually Linguistic Humour: Git

(1) *Description of the Scene: William calls the Ritz Hotel for Anna. He explains to the hotel receptionist that his flatmate made a mistake and prevented Anna from reaching him.*

(2) *Line: WILLIAM: Um, I know she's using another name.*

*The problem is  
she left the message with my flatmate...  
which was a very serious mistake.  
Um, I don't know.  
Imagine, if you will,  
the stupidest person  
you've ever met.  
Are you doing that?*

*HOTEL RECEPTIONIST: Yes, sir, I have him in my mind.*

*WILLIAM: And now double it.*

*And that is the, um--what can I say--  
the git that I am living with.*

(3) *Translation: 我知道 她说她用了另一个名字*

*问题是她把话留给了我的同屋*

*这是个很严重的错误*

*你能回想一下*

*你见过的最愚蠢的人吗?*

*-是的 先生 我已经想到了一个*

*-那就再乘以二 得出结果就是...*

*跟我住在一起的那个废物*

(4) *Back Translation: WILLIAM: I know she said she has used another name.*

*The point is she left the message with my flatmate.*

*This is a very serious mistake.*

*Can you recall a bit*

*The most foolish person you've ever met.*

*HOTEL RECEPTIONIST: Yes, sir. I think I have someone in mind*

*WILLIAM: I will multiple by two the result is...*

*The good-for-nothing who is living with me.*

This instance is an example of contextually linguistic humour because of the use of sarcasm and specifically British slang. "Git" is English slang referring to "An unpleasant or contemptible person" (*OED*). The Chinese subtitles do not translate the meaning of their source word, rather they translate the character of the flatmate from the film's actions. The Chinese subtitles render "git" as "废物"/ "the good-for-nothing". A phrase which underlines the flatmate's uselessness but not his unpleasantness. The subtitles in this instance therefore translate the film as context rather than the word in question. Humour remains in the dialogue's sarcasm. It is clear in both versions that the foolish person the hotel receptionist has in mind is William himself, but the insult to the flatmate is lessened and altered. So too is the register of the insult as the Chinese is more formal than the English slang.

It is interesting to note that the amateur Chinese subtitles replace the source text VEH with an idiomatic expression in the receiving culture to transfer humour. They opt for a domesticating expression to retain the humorous effect, rendering "git" as "饭桶" / "rice bucket". Originally, "rice bucket" means a person with a gigantic appetite. However, this term is more popularly associated with useless people who can do nothing but eat (Chazidian.com). "Rice bucket" works as an idiomatic replacement for the source text because it replicates its register and is domestically appropriate. Via its contextualisation, comic effect is transferrable to the target language and attention paid to the culture (Rose Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli and Whitsitt 2010, p. 166). The amateur subtitlers' attempts to replace the original slang "git" with an idiomatic expression, "饭桶"/ "rice bucket", suggest that contextual equivalence plays a crucial part in preserving humour. While the authorised subtitles deliver the contextual meaning, the amateur subtitles' choice considers the situational appropriateness inherent both from the scene and the film's

dialogues that mutually produce contextual humour. The next instance's linguistic innovation concerning "demi-cappu" underlines the translational act of explication to try to transfer humour in the Chinese subtitles.

**Example 9 Contextually Linguistic Humour: Demi-cappu**

(1) *Description of the Scene: William's travel bookshop is not making money. Martin offers to go and get coffee to ease his pain. But William humorously suggests that all he can afford to buy is a half cup at the moment.*

(2) *Line: WILLIAM: This is work, by the way,  
my little travel bookshop,  
...which, um, well, sells travel books  
...to be frank with you,  
doesn't always sell many of those.  
Classic.  
Profit from major sales push,  
minus £347.*

*MARTIN: Shall I, uh,  
go and get you a cappuccino?  
You know, ease the pain a bit.*

*WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah.  
Better make it a half.  
All I can afford.*

*MARTIN: Get your logic.  
Demi-cappu coming right up.*

(3) *Translation: 这就是我工作的地方  
小小的旅游书店  
这里专卖旅游书籍  
老实说 营业状况不是很好  
真够经典  
打折促销后利润是负 347 英镑  
-要不要我帮你来杯卡布奇诺?*

可以缓解一下痛苦

-好吧 好吧

最好是半杯 我买不起一整杯了

-明白 半份卡布奇诺这就到

(4) *Back Translation: WILLIAM: This is where I work.*

*A little travel bookshop*

*which only sells travel books.*

*To be frank doesn't sell many of them*

*Indeed classic.*

*After the sales, the profit is minus 347 pounds*

*MARTIN: Shall I help you to buy a cup of Kabuqinuo  
to ease the pain a bit?*

*WILLIAM: Okay, okay.*

*Better make it a half. I cannot afford to buy the  
whole one.*

*MARTIN: Got it. Half cup of Kabuqinuo on its way.*

The humour in this dialogue stems from the situation. William's finances are perilous and he suggests only buying a cup of coffee in order to be economical despite the fact that coffee is not sold in such measure. Humour derives from Martin's ability to turn this unavailable product into a barista-like phrase, almost as if referencing a real product or patenting it. There is no such thing as a "demi-cappu", but Martin's use of the language of coffee shops implies there is. The Chinese subtitles are unable to reproduce Martin's newly coined phrase in any meaningful or playful way. Instead, they explain it. The wordplay of "cappu" is explicated in the Chinese subtitles via the transliteration of the original term cappuccino, "卡布奇诺" / "Kabuqinuo". The Chinese subtitles keep the imagery of coffee, a drink now available but not originating from China, they make a phonetic transcription of it. The subtitles' choice in this case is faithful to the target audiences' acceptance when rendering the foreign item Cappuccino with its full transcription.

**Example 10 Contextually Linguistic Humour: Box**

(1) *Description of the Scene: William is upset in his room while Spike is trying to comfort him because Anna has just broken his heart.*

(2) *Line: WILLIAM: I've opened Pandora's box  
and there's trouble inside.*

.....

*SPIKE: I knew a girl at school  
called Pandora.*

*Never got to see her box...*

(3) *Translation: 我打开了潘多拉的盒子  
里面充满麻烦*

.....

*-我在学校认识一个女孩*

*也叫潘多拉*

*不过我从没看过她的盒子*

(4) *Back Translation: WILLIAM: I opened Panduola's box  
full of trouble inside.*

.....

*SPIKE: I knew a girl at school*

*also named Panduola.*

*But I've never seen her box.*

The present example contains a wordplay to deliver humorous effect. According to Dirk Delabastita (1993, p. 57), *wordplay* is:

[...] the general name indicating the various textual phenomena (i.e. on the level of performance or *parole*) in which certain features inherent in the structure of the language used (level of competence or *langue*) are exploited in such a way as to establish a communicatively significant, (near)-simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings (signifieds) and more or less similar forms (signifiers).

The signifieds in the present example are two simultaneous confrontations of the word "box". The first box relates to trouble; the second box is completely different, relating to female genitalia. "Pandora's Box" is a universally acknowledged reference meaning any potential harmfulness (Zamzami and Kroemer 2001, p. 67). People's awareness of this universally recognisable term is originally drawn on the audience's familiarity with its

metaphorical meaning from Greek mythology. Seen in this light, this example clearly taps into Zabalbeascoa's category of "complex jokes" (national joke and linguistic joke) and the chapter's category, "contextually linguistic humour". There is a stark contrast between William's heart-breaking agony and Spike's absurd fantasy about his acquaintance with a girl called Pandora and her genitalia. The humour is thus generated from the contrast between William's agony and despair and Spike's naughtiness and absurdity. Humour is also generated by the fact that box is not a word conventionally used to describe female genitalia. The association between the box and female genitalia is only triggered by the context which Spike sets up.

However, the wordplay fails to translate into Chinese. Replication is used to convey the conceptual meaning. "Pandora's box" becomes "潘多拉的盒子"/ "Pandora's box". Thanks to its universally recognisable meaning in relation to potential trouble, Chinese audiences are aware of its referential meaning, though not perhaps of its mythical source. The Chinese subtitles make less sense than the English source as there is no referential link between her box and the female genitalia. It is important to note that while the official subtitles delete the sexual overtones of the original, the amateur subtitles again are far freer and convey the sexuality of their British source "从没看到过她的私处"/ "have never seen her private part" in a more sexually explicit manner than the original metaphorical phrase "her box". Instead of making the sexual connotation explicit, the more common way to translate sexuality is to tone down the sexual implication because the acceptance of speaking sexuality varies across cultures (Allan and Burridge 2006, p. 144). Regarding sexuality, Lisa Rofel (2007, p. 144) argues that Chinese culture seems to be more repressed than liberated, therefore, it would be better to mitigate erotic issues to the target receptor. If awkward humour comes in via Spike's wordplay "but I've never seen her box" to encourage William, the Chinese "不过我从没看过她的盒子"/ "But I've never seen her box" casts an irrelevant ambiguity which is completely at odds with Spike's clear attempt to use sexuality to comfort William who is currently heartbroken. The Chinese audiences may be able to glean and sense humour from Spike's playful and funny facial expression as his physical imagery complements to make humorous effect. In this example, verbal and visual humour are integrated to interpret the overall comic effect. Though in the subtitles' choice, they provide an irrelevant term "她的盒子" / "her box"



to lessen the contextual humour of the original, humour is clearly generated when read in association with Spike's awkward facial expression. According to Baldry and Thibault's multimodality (2006, p. 49), external resources assist the understanding of contextual meaning.

In summary, the Chinese translations relating to contextually linguistic humour adopt explication making the core meaning of the original humour accessible for Chinese audiences. In so doing, they alter the humorous effect. The linguistic innovation and humorous effect are not always able to transcend cultural and linguistic divides through mere explication of the English source into the receiving culture. Humorous effect is not readily possible via pure replication without the consideration of contextual wordplay when translating the sexually related phrase "her box".

### 6.5.2.3. Contextually Cultural and Linguistic Humour

The following two examples can best be understood under the rubric of contextually cultural and linguistic humour because each individual instance conveys complexities of cultural, linguistic and contextual components. Zabalbeascoa's (1996) complex jokes will be used to supplement the understanding of these complexities.

#### Example 11 Contextually Cultural and Linguistic Humour: Meat Loaf

(1) *Description of the Scene: After having sex with William, Anna curiously asks William about how men regard breasts.*

(2) *Line: ANNA: What is it about men and nudity?*

*Particularly breasts – how can you be so interested in them?*

*No seriously. I mean, they're just breasts. Every second person in the world has got them...*

*WILLIAM: More than that actually, when you think about it. You know, Meatloaf has a very nice pair...*

(3) *Translation: 男人对裸体干嘛那么着迷?*

特别是乳房

怎么就那么感兴趣呢?

真的 乳房就是乳房

全世界一半的人都有乳房

-恐怕不止 米特罗夫也有

(4) *Back Translation: ANNA: Why men are so obsessed with nudity?*

*Especially breasts.*

*Why are you so interested in them?*

*To be honest, breasts are just breasts.*

*Half of the people in the world have breasts.*

*WILLIAM: I'm afraid more than that Miteluofu has them.*

“Meat loaf” is the stage name of an American musician and actor: Michael Lee Aday, who used to be very overweight. The humour, based on the connection between “Meat Loaf” and “big breasts”, works for Western culture. “Meat Loaf” who achieved and sustained fame in the entertainment industry from 1971, is renowned in the West. But he is far less famous in Chinese culture and that complicates the translator’s job. The humour includes a culturally loaded element (“Meat Loaf”), the sex scene context, and a metaphor (obese men and their big breasts) marking this as a contextually cultural and linguistic humour situation. The subtitles fail to convey the humour involved, making no attempt to render either the metaphor or the referential meaning in relation to breast, consequently inserting an element of incoherence for the target audiences. In the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999), the humorous elements of the English source are replaced with the Chinese transcription “米特罗夫” / “Miteluofu”. Large elements of the audiences would have no cultural referent to attach to the name “Meat Loaf”. The image therefore has problematic meaning and potentially little humour. Intriguingly, the amateur subtitles again offer a far freer rendering to this line, “大胸部的确很漂亮” / “big breasts are really very pretty” which is sexually more explicit than the original metaphorical use of “Meatloaf has a very nice pair” in context. The final example in this section underlines the complexities of the cultural and linguistic terms drawn from contextual humour in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* by replacing an idiomatic expression in the target

language. It strikingly shows a multitude of strategies when translating the slang term “whoopsidaisies” from the lens of different cultural adaptations.

**Example 12 Contextually Cultural and Linguistic Humour: Whoopsidaisies**

(1) *Description of the Scene: William and Anna take a walk after Honey’s birthday party and Anna wants to enter a private garden which is full of adventure and mysteries. Without the owner’s permission, William is too afraid to go inside. However, in order to please Anna who requests to enter the garden, he finds the courage to climb the front gate of the garden.*

(2) *Line: WILLIAM: All these streets round*

*here have these mysterious communal  
gardens in the middle of them.  
They're like little villages.*

*ANNA: Let's go in.*

*WILLIAM: Ah, no, that's the point. They're*

*private villages. Only the people who live round the edges are allowed in.*

*ANNA: Oh. You abide by rules like that?*

*WILLIAM: No, no. Other people do. But not me.*

*I just do what I want.*

*.....*

*Whoopsidaisies.*

*.....*

*ANNA: No one has said "Whoopsidaisies" for fifty years and*

*even then it was only little girls*

*with blonde ringlets.*

(3) *Translation: 这一带有许多*

*这样神秘的社区花园*

*就像小村落似的*

*-咱们进去吧*

*-不行 这是私人花园*

*只有住在附近的人能进去*

-你这么守规矩?  
-我不 别人都这样  
我是个随心所欲的人  
好  
哎哟我的妈爷子  
.....  
-没人说哎哟我的妈爷子  
早没人这么说了  
有五十年了  
而且还是卷毛小姑娘说的话

(4) *Back Translation: WILLIAM: There are many mysterious communal gardens  
in this area  
just like little village.*

*ANNA: Let's go in.*

*WILLIAM: No, this is private garden  
only people who live nearby can go in.*

*ANNA: Are you following rules like that?*

*WILLIAM: No, other people do.  
I do whatever I want.*

*Okay.*

*ANNA: Oh, my mum's grandpa.  
No one has said so  
for fifty years  
also it was said by curly-hair little girl.*

This example revolves around a key term “Whoopsidaiesies”, a term which is clearly and culturally British. As a British-American co-production<sup>98</sup>, *Notting Hill* (1999) subtly

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<sup>98</sup> *Notting Hill* (1999) reflects the possibilities of British-American relationships by means of the co-production of the film (Mather, 2006:159). But what majorly makes it a British film is the production companies which are Notting Hill Pictures, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment and Working Title Films. The film signalled the last moment of PolyGram's brave attempt to compete with the American films in terms of production, distribution and exhibition. The huge success of this film foresaw a period of boom in the British film industry where fortunes relied heavily in American distribution (Dyja, 2010:263-264).

combines the strengths of popular American culture with the British social awareness of middle-class values and modes of conduct (Mather 2006, p. 169). In this scene, William represents the character of the diffident, modest and reserved English gentleman who does not dare to break the rules to enter a private garden in order to please his dream girl while Anna personifies the American film star goddess at her most confident and brave. She is prepared to take on any challenge. William's Englishness and his class are expressed in his language. "Whoopsidaisies" is a case in point. "Whoopsidaisies" is a colloquial expression to convey surprise or dismay, specifically upon the discovery of one's own error (Morbey 2002). This colloquialism is embedded in this humorous exchange to underline William's traditional values and language as he refuses to break into a garden. Humour is generated by the clash of William's traditional values and speech and with Anna's modernity and boldness. The Chinese subtitles translate "whoopsidaisies" with "哎哟我的妈爷子"/ "Oh, my mum's grandpa". They use an idiomatic expression in Chinese to maintain the funniness and archaism of the original though this expression no longer circulates in contemporary Chinese culture. It was used to depict similar surprise or dismay. Intriguingly, "whoops" is translated into Chinese "哎哟"/ "Oh (Ai yo)" with the equal exclamation in an old-fashioned style. It is important to note that while the official subtitles maintain the humorous and archaic style of the original, the amateur subtitles simply transliterate the Chinese adaptation of "Mama Mia", another phrase/title, which similarly expresses "surprise and astonishment" (*OED*). There is another intriguing cultural adaptation in relation to the film's dialogue "only little girls with blonde ringlets". The Chinese subtitles substitute it with a colourless "卷毛小姑娘"/ "curly-hair little girl" mainly because of the physical difference in relation to hair colour between Britain and China.

To summarise, the above two examples illustrate that a multitude of strategies are employed when conveying contextually linguistic and cultural humour from the source film. While cultural and linguistic equivalence is a key strategy when subtitling "whoopsidaisies" into Chinese, equivalence is ultimately achieved in relation to the terms' cultural origins as the Chinese subtitles make alterations and replace the English with a Chinese idiomatic expression to echo the original archaism and humour. The Chinese subtitles also lose humorous effect when they transcribe the culturally and linguistically

specific term “Meat Loaf”. Sometimes, incoherence of information flow occurs in the Chinese subtitles that obstructs humour as it seeks to cross cultural boundaries.

## 6.6. Conclusion

Having analysed the indicated types of humour, the translation strategies of Chiaro’s (2004, p. 42) VEH, and the solutions adopted by the Chinese subtitlers in the case study of *Notting Hill* (1999), I have found that the problem in translating humour is not so much with the language itself, but with the function of the text. By manipulating the texts, a translator can deliberately transfer culture, politics and ideology to the receiving audience in an effective and idiomatic way (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, p. 88). To be explicit, it is the translator’s choice to recontextualise the source text, replacing relations to the source text with a receiving intertext. In this way, the target language and culture largely influence the translation (Venuti 2013, p. 181). Based on Venuti’s notion of *triple context* (2013, p. 181), in association with the chapter’s examples, the findings regarding the transfer of humour from English into Chinese in the subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999) can be summed up in three steps: the process of decontextualising the source text, the process of recontextualising the target text, and the final step, considering the relation and function between the source and the target text. Such three-fold process is not simply linguistic, but also cultural, as translators constantly inscribe an interpretation of the source text within the target culture, by applying a complex approach that intervenes between the source language and culture, and the translating language and culture (Venuti 2013, p. 181). By this means, humour can be transferred across different languages and cultures.

In order to examine the complexities involved in the process of the translation of humour, I have identified relevant instances of humour, observed what the Chinese subtitles have done to translate them, and finally analysed how the complexities of verbal and non-verbal humour can be tackled in translation. If we now return to the questions posed at the outset of this chapter, as far as culturally bound elements of humour are concerned, the examples from *Notting Hill* have shown that Zabalbeascoa’s (1996) categories seem to be particularly inspiring when describing the types of humour in this film. Based on his categories, I have added a more focused classification to discuss the complexities of verbal

humour and the conflation of verbal and visual humour drawn from the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999). Priority should be given to contextual, cultural and linguistic factors involved in the transfer of humour to the receiving culture. Therefore, three context-related subcategories of contextual humour are proposed, which are contextually cultural, contextually linguistic and the conflation of these two. The Chinese subtitles largely rely on explication and at times replication, transliteration and replacing an idiomatic expression in the target culture to transfer humour. But the translated humour drawn from the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* (1999) works best when considering its equal humour, contextual appropriation and linguistic adaptation of the original. To respond the translation strategies that have been employed in this case, the replacement of the VEH in the source language with an idiomatic expression in the TT is more acceptable to the Chinese audience in that a transparent and natural translation is essential to evoke a similar effect to that of the original receptors (Nida 1964, p. 163). Furthermore, replication and adaptation also lie at the heart of the employed translational strategies in the case. However, reproducing the cultural equivalent in the target language requires a sophisticated level of creativity in the process of humour translation, e.g. when dealing with the frequent use of wordplay in the ST, when humour is an integral part of the cultural and historical context (Bianchi 2014, p. 478). The overall transfer of humour in the Chinese subtitles of *Notting Hill* is not always possible unless contextually humorous equivalence is considered in the Chinese subtitles. This equivalence resonates with Venuti's (2013, p. 180) decontextualisation and recontextualisation where the translation removes the source text's cultures, values and traditions and replaces them with a text that is contextually humorous in the target culture. Overall, contextual consideration is a core factor echoed in the process of subtitling humour in this chapter. This chapter urges a rethinking of contextual significance along with linguistic and cultural items as a tool for guaranteeing access to humour. Research in this area is underdeveloped therefore this chapter has provided accessible and useful resources for transferring humour to a Chinese audience.

## 7. Conclusion

The chapters of this thesis have sought to underline the complex and intricate linguistic and cultural negotiations which take place when Anglophone films are subtitled for a Chinese audience. The thesis as a whole has highlighted the way in which these complex translational processes become even more resonant when read via the prism of a variety of disciplines: translation theory, cultural studies, political criticism and literary analysis. What the case studies have cumulatively shown is that while the subtitling process allows for elements of British history, culture and politics to permeate the Chinese film market, the cultural permeation is not one directional. The subtitles convey the Anglophone language and culture of their source, but they do so in a way which is innately rooted in, shaped by and filtered through Chinese culture. At the heart of this dissertation has been an intention to explore Venuti's (1986, pp. 20-21) argument that translators have before them a clear-cut and binary strategy. They have the choice either to foreignise or to domesticate the culture of their source, Venuti argues. Each of the case study chapters has unpicked the processes of foreignisation and domestication at play in the films in question. The thesis has used five different genres of English-language film in order to provide a variety of case studies against which to test Venuti's theory. The thesis has underlined that Venuti's binary theory fails to encompass all the complexities and specificities inherent in the text-oriented analysis. The case studies strongly suggest that an extended approach involving cultural theory, political theory, historical analysis and literary criticism, allows for a more subtle reading of the often complex subtitling strategies. This extended and complex theoretical model facilitated translation theory in its identity-forming process of translation. What follows is a detailed summary of the findings and contributions of the present study, concluding with recommendations opened by this thesis for further endeavours in the field of subtitling theory and practice and its interdisciplinary study.

The guiding research questions of this thesis were:

- (1) How do the five case studies cast light on the complexities and specificities of the subtitling process between Anglophone source films and the Chinese context for which they are destined when subtitled?



- (2) How do the case study films mediate the British culture and language of their source for the Chinese culture of their target audience?
- (3) Do specific film genres trigger the use of specific subtitling strategies in specific film genres or is the process of subtitling more fluid and dynamic?

### 7.1. Main Findings

Through the study of the subtitled films of thematically diverse genres, it has become evident that the subtitling strategies adopted in the Chinese context offer a compelling contrast: a domestic representation of the British text and culture is clearly identified in translational and cultural terms while this representation at times is faintly or characteristically British. As Venuti (1998, p. 86) argues, what is deemed key to the cultural formation in relation to translation is the translator's ambivalence toward catering for a domestic readership and actively preserving "a potential source of cultural change":

Each project exhibits in an especially clear way the process of identity formation at work in translation, as well as its various effects. [...] For notwithstanding the fact that translation is summoned to address the linguistic and cultural differences of a foreign text, it can just as effectively foster or suppress heterogeneity in the domestic culture.

If translation has such a complicated and complex process underpinning discrepancies in forming cultural identities, this text-oriented project contributes to a collaborative and reciprocal production where linguistic, cultural, political and historical boundaries between Britain and China are permeable. In this project, key issues of subtitling Anglophone films revealed that British cultural identities have been reformulated and reshaped into the receiving Chinese culture. The five case study films under scrutiny offered an architecture of the subtitling strategies adopted in the Chinese context and a mediation and portrayal of these films to Chinese culture.

Not only specific subtitling strategies in specific genres are found in each of the case study chapters to meet the target audience's expectation for a specific type of film genres, but fluid and dynamic strategies are deployed to accommodate such complexities to the receiving culture. Cuteness, rhyme structure, childlike appellation and creative expressions are devised to resonate Harry Potter's fantastic and magical world (Chapter 2) for a Chinese youth audience. The strategy of foreignisation via transliteration of made-up names in Harry Potter's supernatural world as such acts of transliteration are not only

faithful to the sounds of the English original, but also carry over the strangeness and foreignness of the sounds that apply equally to the English and the Chinese contexts, echoing the fantasy of the original with its magical strangeness. While there is a clear translation loss in relation to J.K. Rowling's play on words and their cultural resonances, on another level it is interesting to note the ways in which the Chinese subtitles in their frequent acts of domestication gain multiple meanings of their own to resonate the fantasy of the origin, despite the fact that at times that domestic subject is still in its ostensibly foreign nature.

Margaret Thatcher's conservatism, despite being antithetical to China's communism, is maintained in the Chinese subtitles, which foregrounds the distinct political structures (Chapter 3), projecting political imagery that may be both "disruptive and serendipitous" (Venuti 1998, p. 68). The subtitles domesticate heavily by using Chinese four-character idioms which clearly anchor the viewers in a Chinese linguistic context even while they watch a film with a visibly foreign origin and opposing political values. The subtitles, therefore, convey a conservative ideology in a context entirely opposed to that ideology via these Chinese idioms that not only transfer the foreign language but also the foreign political culture to the receiving culture.

Historical specificities in early nineteenth-century England are reshaped to develop China's own cultural heritage by employing either archaic or modern Chinese (Chapter 4). The Chinese subtitles communicate with their target audiences through a lexical construction that is at times fluent but formal, even archaic and nostalgic, projecting the image of a British cultural history with clear Chinese characteristics. Apart from the linguistic analysis, the concept of foreignness in relation to culturally specific items associated with the early Victorian era (religious terminology and currency) is recognisably alien for a contemporary Chinese audience in chronological and cultural terms. The Chinese subtitles compensate for geographical origin by addition. Explication is implemented when a reluctance to straddle the foreign and domestic culture takes place in the subtitling act.

A display of (in)appropriate levity in *Bridget Jones's Diary* is reinterpreted into female emancipation for Chinese female audiences (Chapter 5). Translating sex and gender

crosses cultural and ideological boundaries between Britain and China. Though talking about sex and using vulgar languages are highly controversial and impolite in Chinese culture, the Chinese subtitles actively mediate and moderate the level of sexuality and vulgarity to accommodate the (in)appropriateness in the source text.

Finally, a comedy embedded with British humour is again relocated to a Chinese context where Chinese female audiences gain multiple encouragements for their love life and their professional life (Chapter 6). Central to the endeavour of transferring humour to Chinese culture is an awareness of the contextually humorous approximation. Seen in this light, the overall transfer of humour in the Chinese subtitles is readily possible as the key examples “small nuclear devices”, “whoopsidaisies” and “cooking the books” have shown. Otherwise, the British humour largely decreases its comic effect in the Chinese rendering.

As the above five case studies have shown, foreign texts and culture have permeated Chinese culture. They at times reinforce, downplay and intertwine their quintessential British identities to those of Chinese. The Chinese authorities and subtitlers mediate such identities and consolidate their own domestic agenda. Therefore, according to Antoine Berman (1992, p. 65), the foreign text becomes interesting and revealing when the translated text invites its reader/audience to acknowledge the domestic values that mirrored and recognised the selection of that particular foreign text. As this text-oriented analysis has revealed, the selection and reception of these films in China has replaced the British identities of the source film with its target-culture and target-audience preferred representation and successfully passed on these identities even though at an ostensibly foreign level. From a wider perspective, while archaisation, borrowed words and slangy-style expression are forms of foreignisation in a way, only standard Chinese, the one spoken by educated people, the one people read on the local newspapers, and the one mediated by the government office, is proper domestication. The subtitling process in this project suggested that these binary translation strategies complement each other to produce a target audience/culture-oriented translation for a contemporary Chinese audience.

Furthermore, despite the fact that specific criteria for the import of foreign films are strictly stipulated by the China Film Corporation, which requires a film to support

politically China and Communism and to exclude culturally religious propaganda, pornography or violence (Zhang 2004, p. 191), this study has shown that there is a clear attempt to include an ideology that is opposed to that of China and also to include sexually explicit and politically and culturally restricted topics. Such disparity between what is officially perceived as appropriate to the target culture and what is actually made available on the Chinese market suggests a gap to be filled by the Chinese authorities to meet the demand of contrasting audiences in a contemporary era. As flagged up earlier, Chapter 3 has shown that the political ideology of the first female Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, is entirely distinct from China's Communism. There is another prohibited set of values regarding sexuality and swearing which can be found in Chapter 5, "Subtitling Bridget Jones's Fantasy World: The Transfer of Sexuality and Gender in a Chick Flick". The Chinese reception of these thematically heterogeneous films thus evidences this attempt, an attempt that disregards the strict criteria stipulated by the Chinese authorities.

## 7.2. Research Contribution

The dissertation is situated within the growing field of studies dedicated to the ever-expanding global phenomenon of audio-visual translation. In its sustained attempt to consider the multi-layered subtitling process in relation to the contexts of production and reception, the thesis highlights in a detailed and perceptive way the many factors involved in bridging the considerable linguistic and cultural gap between Britain and China. Crucially, the project is a multidisciplinary study with fields of Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, Political Criticism and Literary Analysis. It cannot be based on a pre-structured and single-dimensional methodology as no single theoretical or practical toolkit by any theorist facilitates complete answers to the research questions. Therefore, a major task of this Ph.D. is to develop a practical framework based on associated translation theories and to combine the extremely relevant disciplines to act as a theoretical structure. From a theoretical perspective, the thesis has utilised a multitude of translation theories (Venuti, Schleiermacher, Lefevere, Chiaro, Zabalbeascoa) to do justice to the complexity of the act of subtitling, instead of assessing it in solely linguistic terms. Apart from translation theories, the project employs a dynamic range of theoretical models to read the Chinese subtitles. It marries other theoretical approaches such as cultural studies (Higson, Morris),

Chinese studies (Lin Shu, Confucius), political analysis (Charteris-Black, Meifang Zhang) and literary criticism (Wai-Yee Hung, Griswold) that are complementary to the understanding of Venuti's (1986, pp. 20-21) binary translation theory of Foreignisation and Domestication. At first glance, these theories may seem scattered throughout the thesis. However, on closer inspection, such a combination, in its complexity, functions intellectually to analyse the corpus from a broader sense. Integrating cultural theories, Chinese studies, political analysis and literary criticism with the theoretically solid translation argument proposed by Venuti, this project provides new insights into the identity-forming process of subtitling from English to Chinese, which is not a static one-way process, but rather, a multi-layered and multi-directional process. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990, p. 223) point out that a dual process takes place from linguistic and cultural terms between two languages and cultures. This project extends that the formation of British cultural identities to contemporary China simultaneously is a bi-political, bi-ideological, bi-historical, bi-target-audience-oriented process. From a methodological angle, the thesis has assessed a hybrid of thematically diverse film genres. Through this diversity, a relatively thorough blueprint of the subtitling strategies adopted in the Chinese context has become visible that assisted an in-depth analysis of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer. Finally, from a practical perspective, the specificities and complexities behind the subtitling process of varied Anglophone film genres have provided critical insights useful not only to translation studies but also to interdisciplinary studies.

Broadly speaking, the project has sought to detect key cultural shifts and political evolution in the process of subtitling for a contemporary Chinese audience. More specifically, it argues that the subtitling strategies were heavily influenced by the indication of the social and political convention and development of the target culture that have downplayed the role of the subject and retained a strategically inconsistent distinction between the need of the target culture and the demand of the target audience. This view is thus challenged by a dynamic and fluid translation strategies that build on Venuti's (1986) binary position of Domestication and Foreignisation. In other words, the act of subtitling transcends the boundaries of the clear-cut strategy of Domestication of

Foreignisation and is best understood as a cumulative sum of what Venuti (1986) hypothesised and a notion that functionality empowers the translation mission.

### 7.3. Possibilities for Future Research

The scope of this study is, inevitably, limited, focusing on the Chinese subtitling practice and its multiple transfers of linguistics, culture, politics, history, ideology, gender, sexuality and humour from a British to a Chinese context. Moving within the basic parameters of the present study and building on its findings, it would be interesting to consider a wider range of film genres, in order to achieve a better representation of the thematic diversity of Anglophone films. Studying the increasing subtitling flow from China to the Anglophone world, on the other hand, would increase our understanding of the still relatively recent practice that sustains this unique instance of reversal of established global translation flows. Finally, further research relating to geographically defined national and cultural identities other than those of Britain and China would be worthwhile in its own right, but also for its potential to lead to insightful comparisons across a variety of contexts.

To complement the focus on the officially sanctioned subtitling practice in China, the widespread but understudied phenomenon of fansubbing by amateur translators, who are not generally academically trained, also deserves the attention of researchers. The unique subculture of fansubbing fosters voluntary participation and engagement with subtitles to foreign films. According to Luis Pérez-González (2007, p. 71), fansubbing groups proliferate as “self-appointed translation commissioners that choose what is to be subtitled”. Seen in this light, it is significant to explore if such an increased trend of non-official subtitles might bring broader socio-economic and socio-cultural impact for translation apart from the previously discussed attempt to liberate ordinary citizens from state domination (Wang and Zhang 2017, p. 301). Even though English is the language most translated from, the focus could be extended beyond Chinese and English, to reflect the diversity of languages in this research context.

#### 7.4. Suggestions for Practice and Policy

The thesis's unique and extended understanding of translational and cultural representation from Britain to China suggests that a multitude of theories are supplemented to read the act of subtitling. Seen in this light, a possible suggestion would be the development of efforts which could coordinate the creative and effective amateur subtitlers with the professional and well-disciplined authorised subtitlers. The increase in the number of volunteer subtitlers through educational efforts could be matched more appropriately with an increase in demand for large-scale audiovisual products, catering in particular for the younger generation. Although English is the language most translated from, comparatively little effort has been made by the domestic amateur subtitlers to translate from Chinese into English or into European languages with the hope of spreading Chinese culture. Moreover, neither the authorised subtitles nor the fansubbing properly identify the subtitlers who produced the translation. Currently, there is very little institutional support for the volunteering translation and limited attention has been paid to the ontology of the translator. There is a clear gap between the increasing demand for foreign audiovisual products and the scarce awareness of the translation profession in China. Such ignorance and negativity could be countered by more governmental, institutional and financial support for the reinforcement of the symbolic power of linguistic markets through which cultural transmission and commercial cooperation could be made possible for a wider audience, nationally and internationally.

Closely linked to the thesis's findings that subtitling practice operates at a high level of sophistication, the prospect of translation applications (Google Translator, Youdao Voice Translation and Camera Translation, etc.) replacing actual translation professionals seems highly unlikely. Living in the so-called information age, the growing popular artificial intelligence oriented technology makes the world closely connected and people's life convenient and effective, but automatic translation devices still operate at a relatively superficial level. Although such devices may to some extent bridge physical language barriers, they are far from truly replacing human intelligence and may never do so. As Aaron Houghton (2016) argues, there are four reasons supporting this skepticism: the low quality of current machine translation, the enormous volume of languages, the untranslatable context, and the complexity embedded with the source text.

The previous suggestions relating to the translational profession and the identification of subtitler/translator evidence a limited visibility of the overall translation profession in China. To increase the attention paid to translation in China and the ever-developing translation-led profession, a recent Chinese policy, “一帶一路”/ “One Belt One Road Initiative”<sup>99</sup>, may emphasise the important role of the translator in facilitating communication in a multilingual setting. Cooperating with approximately 65 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, this policy showcases a world-leading example of globalisation (Huang 2017). In the process of globalisation, the need for multilingual translation surges as it not only enables multilinguistic and multicultural communication but also develops international trading potential (Global Vision International 2017). If this thesis has shed light on the phenomenon of subtitling practice in terms of the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer, the One Belt One Road Initiative, a mega “going global” project, will bring about a much broader engagement with Translation Studies and with vibrant disciplines such as Cross-cultural Studies, Multilingual Studies, Economic Studies and Global Studies, etc. In light of this research context, through its multiple-layered engagement, translation can be viewed as a significant force in reshaping the globe.

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<sup>99</sup> For more information about the policy of “One Belt One Road Initiative”, please consult Luft (2016).



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