

## การวิเคราะห์การเปลี่ยนชื่อภาพยนตร์ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาจีน

### An Analytical Study of Film Title Translation into Chinese Language

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#### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อวิเคราะห์กลวิธีการเปลี่ยนชื่อภาพยนตร์ต่างประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาจีน กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการศึกษาคือภาพยนตร์ที่ได้ฉายในประเทศไทย และได้รับการเสนอชื่อในการประกวดภาพยนตร์ยอดเยี่ยม ระหว่างปี 2546 – 2555 ผู้วิจัยใช้แนวคิดด้านการแปลของ Larson (1984), Newmark (1981), Munday (1997), Catford (1965), Nida (1961) and Skopos Theory (1970s) เป็นกรอบการวิเคราะห์ซึ่งจำแนกออกเป็น 10 ประเภท คือ 1) การยืมคำโดยไม่มีการดัดแปลง 2) การยืมคำโดยใช้วลีเพื่อขยายความ 3) การยืมคำเป็นบางส่วนโดยไม่มีการดัดแปลง 4) การยืมคำเป็นบางส่วนโดยใช้วลีเพื่อขยายความและคงความหมายเดิมของชื่อไว้ 5) การยืมคำเป็นบางส่วนโดยใช้วลีเพื่อขยายความและคงความหมายและรูปแบบเดิมของชื่อไว้ 6) การแปลตามตัวอักษร 7) การแปลแบบเอาความและคงรูปแบบเดิมของชื่อไว้ 8) การแปลแบบเอาความและคงความหมายเดิมของชื่อไว้ 9) การแปลแบบเอาความและคงความหมายและรูปแบบเดิมของชื่อไว้ 10) การตั้งชื่อใหม่ ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลพบว่าประเภทการแปลที่มีการใช้มากที่สุด 3 ลำดับแรก คือ การแปลตามตัวอักษร การแปลแบบเอาความและคงความหมายและรูปแบบเดิมของชื่อไว้ และการยืมคำเป็นบางส่วนโดยไม่มีการดัดแปลง ตามลำดับ ส่วนการแปลที่พบว่ามีใช้น้อยที่สุด คือ การยืมคำเป็นบางส่วนโดยใช้วลีเพื่อขยายความและคงความหมายและรูปแบบเดิมของชื่อไว้

**คำสำคัญ:** การแปล ชื่อภาพยนตร์ภาษาอังกฤษ ภาษาจีน

#### Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze translation strategies in translation of film in English titles into Chinese language. 118 films, which were nominated in the Academy Award (Oscar) during the year 2003 to 2012, were analyzed. The content analysis of film titles is based on the translation theories of Larson (1984), Newmark (1981), Munday (1997), Catford (1965), Nida (1961), and Skopos Theory (1970s). The researcher found that ten main types were applied to analyze the film titles: 1) complete loan words with no modification, 2) complete loan

words with modification of descriptive phrase, 3) partial loan words with no modification, 4) partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal of the same function as original title, 5) partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal in the same form and function as original title, 6) literal translation, 7) liberal translation with portrayal in the form of original title, 8) liberal translation with portrayal in the function of original title, 9) liberal translation with portrayal in the same form and function as original title, and 10) renaming. The result showed that the most frequent type used in translation of foreign film in English titles into Chinese was literal translation, the second to highest was liberal translation with portrayal in the same form and function as original title and the type of partial loan words with no modification, and the least translation type was partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal in the same form and function as original title.

**Keywords:** translation, English film title, Chinese

## 1. Introduction

Film is an art in the way that it combines the modern technology of film shooting and making with all kinds of art forms, which includes drama, music, first thing the film workers and translators should consider is how to translate the film title literature and many other fields' skills. What is the problem when audiences choose the movie Title! One side, the good title is an abstract core of the film, and the other side is that it can attract the audiences to try the films; this in turn can enlarge the fame of the film director, actors, actresses, editors and film companies. To foreign viewers, title is the first attraction and channel to understand and appreciate other countries' culture and art by movies, even the life of the people. For example, Superman was a popular series movie in China, the typical suit in the movie of the main role gave us a marked impression to the film. The title of

the movie was translated word by word to “超人” (chao ren/Superman). “超” (chao/super) means ‘super’ and expresses something beyond something or someone beyond ordinary people. Nowadays, most people know who Super Man is or what the movie Super Man is all about, even though they have never seen the film before. It was said that “No matter what technique is employed, one fundamental and vital principle that should never be forgotten is that the translation must be related to the story in one way or another” (Eugene, 2001). The appropriated titles do to reach the target audience and finally realize box-office value. Another feature is that the film title also acts as the label and/or advertisement of the film since films are a kind of commodity which needs sales promotion, especially in foreign markets with audiences of different languages and cultural backgrounds. The first impression it gives to the audience is particularly

important. Therefore, the translation of film titles is like the translation of advertisement or label in many aspects. Thus the translated movie titles should be concise and generalizing with commercial and advertising characteristics.

Larson (1984) claims that “translation is based on form and meaning”, Newmark (1998) puts the emphasis on source language and target language. According to Larson and Newmark, the common principles of translation consist of form and meaning, target language emphasize and determining any translation process in the purpose of the overall translation action. There are many types of translation methods by many theorists, depending on their principles. Catford (1965) categorizes translation methods on three types: “extent focusing on how much the text is translated, level emphasizing on levels of language involved in translation, and rank highlighting units of language e.g. sentence, clause, group and word”. Newmark (1981) classified translation methods into two main types: semantic translation and communicative translation. Due to the researcher’s view, translation methods can be classified into three main groups. They are word-for-word translation that the translator translates literally by its most common meaning into target language (TL) while grammatical constructions remain unchanged, literal translation that the translator tries to keep the original form, so there are only few parts of the source language (SL) that are changed, and free translation that the translator changes or adapts the

original form to the TL, so almost every part of the SL is changed.

According to the literature review above, the researcher classifies the study of translation of film title into Chinese to 10 types. 1) The type of complete loan words with no modification is classified by basing on the phonic switching method. This kind of film titles only have the change on the pronunciation by presenting in Chinese. 2) The type of complete loan words with modification of descriptive phrase focuses on the film titles which are translated by loan the words completely from the original title but with adding of some modified descriptive phrases to help readers understand its meaning. In 3) the type of partial loan words with no modification, the film titles have partial words loaning from the English title without any modification. In the part of 4) partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal of the same function as the original title, there is the phonic changing part in the film titles and the modified descriptive phrase by portraying to emphasize the function of the phrase in the titles. 5) The type of partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal of the same form and function as the original title maintains the film titles which have the partial loan words what is appeared in the title by adding with a descriptive phrase, this type will focus on the form and function of the phrases to the title. The next type is 6) the literal translation, this type is analyzed by the literal translation method to explain the language difference between English and Chinese. In the 7) type of liberal translation with

portrayal of the form of the original title, the film titles are translated liberally by adding a similar portrayed form presented in the title. 8) Liberal translation with portrayal of the same function as the original title is the type to focus on the liberal translation titles which are the translator uses with some functional phrase. In 9) the type of liberal translation with portrayal of the same form and Function as the original title, the researcher will analyze the liberal translated titles which have the same text form and same function in the titles. In the 10) type of renaming, it is a rewriting part of the film titles. All the film titles in this type will be renamed by the story, Chinese stereotype and the gap in the two languages. These ten types were synthesized from the scholars' theories and applied in the present study to analyze the data through the method of content analysis.

This case study was based on the foreign language films nominated in The Academy Awards (The Oscar) between the years 2003-2012, incorporating 358 films in total. According to the reputation of the Oscar in the global area, the ranking result of the movies every year is graded by the systematical judgments which are organized by different state of the audiences; there are either normal audiences or the professional and academic film critics. The subjects of 118 film titles in this paper were collected by means of the simple random sampling technique from The Oscar's official website <http://oscar.go.com/>.

## 2. Objectives

This study aims to analyze the type of translation through the English film titles those are translated into Chinese and to investigate translation techniques of films entitlement.

## 3. Materials and Method

The researcher collected the sample of data randomly from the 358 films which were nominated in The Oscar from 2003 to 2012. There were 118 film titles in the sample to be analyzed through the ten main translation types. The researcher collected the titles of English films submitted to The Oscar on the official website of on <http://oscar.go.com/>. The translation theories of Larson, Newmark, Munday, Catford, Nida and Skopos Theory were carefully studied as the background of the analysis. The researcher then classified the theories into 10 types of translation techniques, which served as a framework for the data analysis.

The techniques of the film titles translation mainly fall into the ten translation types: 1) complete loan words with no modification, 2) complete loan words with modification of descriptive phrase, 3) partial loan words with no modification, 4) partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal of the same function as the original title, 5) partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal of the same form and function as the original title, 6) literal translation, 7) liberal translation with portrayal of the form of the original title, 8) liberal translation with portrayal of

the same form and Function as the original title, and 9) liberal translation with portrayal of the same form and function as the original title, 10) renaming.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Regarding the total number and percentage of which translation type is used the most, literal translation definitely contained the highest percentage, the second most used type was liberal translation with portrayal of the same form and function as the original title and partial loan words with modification, and the least used translation type was partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase and portrayal of the same form and function as the original title.

**Table 1** Type of the frequency and percentage of ten translation types in the film titles

Rank	Translation Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1	Type 6. Literal translation	43	36%
2	Type 9. Liberal translation with modification of the same function and form as the original title	13	10.8%
3	Type 3. Partial loan words with no modification	12	10%
4	Type 7. Liberal translation with modification of the same form as the original title	11	9.3%
5	Type 10. Renaming	11	9.3%
6	Type 8. Liberal translation with modification of the same function as the original title	10	8.4%
7	Type 1. Completely loan words with no modification	9	7.5%
8	Type 2. Completely loan words with modification of a descriptive phrase	5	4.3%
9	Type 4. Partial loan words with modification of by a descriptive phrases and portrayal of the same function as the original title	3	2.5%
10	Type 5. Partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrases and portrayal of the same function and form as the original title	1	0.8%

Considering all 118 films titles, it can be summarized from the table that the biggest number of subjects (43 titles or 36%) were translated through the technique of literal translation. Liberal translation with portraying both form and function was applied to 13 titles (10.8%) while 12 titles (10%) relied on the type of partial loan words with no modification. To compare with the completely loan titles, this type presents a combination of the partial words from the original title and the literal translation in a short additional part. The renaming strategy was applied to 11 film titles (9.3%). The type of liberal translation with portraying the form of the original title also came up with similar percentage of 9.3%. To compare with the other types, the type of partial loan words with modifying by a descriptive phrase to maintain the form and function similar to the original title covered only 1 film title.

#### 5. Discussions

According to the findings, literal translation type showed the highest frequency among all. There were 36% English film titles translated by literal translation method. Due to the specific features of Chinese language, “most of the English film titles performed as a literal translated contribution in Chinese.” (Cheang Ka Ian Justina, 2005). This aspect of findings is also in line with Benjarat Viggayathap (2007). In Chinese theatres, *Slumdog Millionaire* was translated by literal translation method without adding any descriptive phrases or lexical edition in Chinese language as “贫民窟的百万富翁” (pin min

ku de bai wan fu weng/*Slumdog Millionaire*). On the base, an implicit standard has been built in Chinese film market in evidence, that “literal translated film titles are the directive way to immediately attract the Chinese audiences by the film information, such as the film story, background of the film and the aims of the film makers. Generally, translators do not give the extra explanations to the Chinese titles.” (Li Qian, 2007).

The result showed that in literal translation type, there were no any titles performed with the kind of words like action or explanation of the situation, such as *Cold Mountain* (“冷山”/leng shan/cold mountain), *The Queen* (“女王”/nǚ wang/ the queen), *Little Miss Sunshine* (“阳光小美女”/yang guang xiao mei nǚ/little Miss sunshine), *Dark of the Moon* (“月黑之时”/yue hei zhi shi/dark of the moon), and *War Horse* (“战马”/zhan ma/war horse) all they did not have the action words to interpret the story again in the titles.

The result also showed that the partial loan words with modification of a descriptive words and portrayal of the same form and function as the original title was the least used type in the film title translation. The only film title of this type was *Alice in Wonderland*, it was translated as “爱丽丝梦游奇境” (ai li si meng you qi jing/ Alice sleepwalking in the wonderland) by its original Chinese contribution. It was the only one title which was a complete copy of the traditional translated version.

This Chinese title not only presented the character as in the original title, but also partially featured the plot of the story. The reason can be attributed to the fact that “the great difference between English and Chinese is from their cultures, some of the translation contribution should be adopted in two languages translation in order to meet the needs of the readers, the language and the function of the text” (Hong Guo, 2011). *Alice in Wonderland* was imported with the Chinese name as “爱丽丝梦游奇境” and was used continually to nowadays.

Using these strategies, translators allowed Chinese viewers to obtain more cultural information of the exotic films. The values of English film title were rendered with the different text form, function and features in Chinese, including the commercial, informative, cultural, and aesthetic values. In translating a mode of cultural products like movie titles, translation principles always serve to maintain faithfulness, cultural awareness, and combination of commercial and aesthetic effects (Lu Yin, 2009). Through an appropriate translation, an ordinary English film title come closer to Chinese audiences and means much more to them than before.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the translation theories of Larson, Nida, Newmark, Catford, Munday and Skopos Theory, the subjects included randomly chosen 118 film titles from The Oscar during 2003 to 2012, out of the total of 358 titles. And the researcher analyzed the translation techniques which were used in the 118 film

titles based on ten main translation types used in the translation process. The result showed that literal translation was the most frequently used type. Comparatively, partial loan words with modification of a descriptive phrases and portrayal of the same form and function as the original title is the least frequent type among all.

This study focuses on the translation techniques used in film title translation. It is limited to cover all the translation study; therefore, the researcher hope the present study can serve as a springboard to further studies of translation with different sources of data, such as book translation, film subtitle translation, news translation, and song lyric translation. With this, the researcher hopes that the present study can ignite some ideas regarding further studies in the field of translation with different frameworks of analysis.

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