

A Research on the Differences Between Movie Title Translations in China's Mainland and Taiwan: A Case Study on the English Movies in Top 250 of Douban

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Abstract

As a special advertising language, the translation of film titles has been a critical subject of translation studies and cultural translation. The author gives an overall review of the relevant literature from source journals and finds that the differences between translated film titles in Chinese Mainland and Taiwan are mostly attributed to translation methods and value orientation. However, the researches targeted at factors behind them are rarely seen. As such, based on the current situation the paper suggests that the scholars in the field increase the width and breadth of our studies by analyzing the root causes of the phenomenon "two translated titles of the same film" from the perspectives of film policy, history and culture, and film market. That is how we can expect mutual understanding and scientific development of film title translation in Chinese Mainland and Taiwan.

Keywords: Film title translation; Chinese Mainland; Taiwan; Film policy; History and culture; Film market

1. Introduction

Without the French Lumier brothers, the film could not have been officially invented. They first played a series of homemade short films on the screen, and the day their film was shown, December 28, 1895, was recognized by historians as the birth date of the film. In the following 20th century, the increasingly influential film became one of the main media and a popular art form (Mao, 2002).

With more and more foreign films introduced into China, scholars have conducted more and more researches on the differences in the translation varieties of film titles between Chinese Mainland and Taiwan. At present, most of the researches on the varieties focused on the translation methods and value orientation factors, and few of them explore the causes behind these factors. This paper holds that the film policy, historical culture and film market should be the root causes of the differences, and thus chooses to analyze the phenomenon from these three perspectives.

2. Research on the Differences

2.1 The differences in the film policies

One of the reasons for the translation differences of English film titles between Chinese Mainland and Taiwan is the long-term unequal film policies. Film policy involves all aspects of film production, introduction, review and screening, which can best reflect the government's attitude towards the film market and the direction

of governance, as well as fully reflect the social ideology and the characteristics of the times. Therefore, the difference of government policies will directly lead to the differences between the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan in the introduction, review and related market regulation of foreign films.

Table 1. Review of Taiwan's Film Policy (1970s-2000s) (Chen Xiaoyan, 2015: 85-86)

Period	Film policy of Taiwan	Description
1970s	Policy on film review has become more stringent.	The government has strengthened the management of the film industry from film review to taxation.
1980s	Policy on the guidance and review of film	The positive guidance and reward measures were implemented, the scale of film inspection was opened, and the tax was reduced. In addition, the external quota system was abolished.
1990s	Policy on film subsidy	Taiwan's "information bureau" supported the production of films through funds.
2000s	The policy of leading cultural and creative industries	As a leading cultural and creative industry, film has been listed as one of the top ten key investment projects.

It can be seen from table 1 that since the 1980s, Taiwan has opened up the film standards and auditing standards, and abolished the quota system for foreign films, which has provided an opportunity for the large-scale introduction of foreign films. In addition, Taiwan's examination of imported films is relatively simple. Most of the imported films enter the Taiwan market mainly through their branches in Taiwan, and after applying to the competent authorities for the issuance of "film import license", the films can be shown.

Unlike Taiwan, the Mainland's procedures for introducing foreign films are more complicated. At present, there are two ways to introduce films in Chinese Mainland, which are revenue-sharing and outright purchase. The so-called revenue-sharing means that the copyright owner entrusts the distribution right to the distribution company in Chinese Mainland, and outright purchase means that the film company in Chinese Mainland buys out the projection right of the film. According to the relevant national policies, only China Film Group Corporation (Zhongying) and Huaxia Film Distribution Co., Ltd. (Huaxia) have the right to distribute imported films, and only Zhongying has the right to introduce foreign films. But whether it is a revenue-sharing or outright purchase, Chinese mainland's annual quota of imported films is strictly limited. For example, the China US trade agreement reached in 2012 stipulated that China should add 14 more films on the basis of 20 American films each year, and this provision has been extended to the present day. However, in either way, films entering the mainland market must be submitted to the Film Censorship Committee for examination. After that, the broadcasting and television administration, the submitting unit, should issue a public screening license before these films can be put into the cinema.

In addition to the differences in the introduction and approval procedures, there are also great differences in the regulatory policies of the film market between the Mainland and Taiwan. Influenced by the socialist system and the socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics, the Mainland has adopted a macro-control system of active intervention, timely reflection and comprehensive management, as shown in Table 2. Taiwan is dominated by "non intervention, financial incentives and government investment" (Wang Ziqi, 2017:32), as shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Review of Major Film Policies in Chinese Mainland after Reform and Opening up (Liu Hanwen, Shen Ya, 2018)

Period	Film policies and measures
Period of Recovery (1978-1991)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of films shown; 2. Strengthen the construction of cinemas; 3. Increase financial support; 4. Introduce foreign films;
Early period of the reform (1992-2001)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reform the film distribution system; 2. Increase the number of imported films; 3. Increase financial support for the film industry;
Period of deepening reform (2002-2011)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carry out the reform of the hospital line system; 2. Speed up the pace of opening up the film industry to the outside world; 3. Promote the development of film digitization;
Period of high quality development (2012-)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of imported revenue-sharing films to 34; 2. Increase the film policy support; 3. Implement the film industry promotion law to regulate the film market; 4. Strengthen international exchanges and cooperation to promote domestic films to the world

Therefore, the more limited introduction channels and strict censorship procedures, coupled with strong market regulation, have directly led to the Mainland's plain and regular style in the translation of imported film titles. The more relaxed reviewing standards and free capitalist market in Taiwan make the translation of film titles more bold and free. For example, *The Bourne Identity*, which is translated in Chinese Mainland as *Dieying Chongchong*, shows the stimulation and full of suspense of the movie, while Taiwan's Chinese translation of Shengui Renzhen adds a more magical and mysterious color to the film, while words like "god" and "ghost" rarely appear in the translation titles in the Mainland.

2.2 The differences in the history and culture

Another important reason for the differences between the two sides is the history and culture. Due to the influence of geographical location, colonial history, cultural character, foreign culture acceptance and language differences, movie titles in Chinese Mainland are more serious and conservative, while those in Taiwan are more harmonious and humorous.

In terms of the differences in geographical factors, the geographical space of the Mainland was nearly closed; the ancient means of transportation and communication were mainly human or animal power, so the

Mainland was in a disadvantageous position in economic and cultural exchanges with the outside world. At the same time, the land area of the Mainland is vast, the terrain types are various, and the agriculture is developing in an all-round way, forming a self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy. Under the double closing of geographical and economic environment, the ancient people of the Mainland formed the mentality of self-respect and self-reliance. They regarded China as the center of the world, so they were conservative in cultural input and transformation. Taiwan is surrounded by the sea on all the sides, with many ports, convenient foreign exchange and rapid development of commodity economy. Therefore, Taiwan is easy to accept and spread foreign things and ideas, and is more inclusive in cultural input.

As far as the differences in colonial history are concerned, the political, economic and cultural centers are all in the Mainland, so they are less affected by foreign aggression. Taiwan is the opposite. In 1624, Taiwan was invaded by Dutch colonists with a history of 38 years. From the first Opium War to 1949, China was reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. The Mainland was vast and not easy to rule. The awakening of Chinese national consciousness and the struggle against colonialism slowed down the speed of invasion and weakened the degree of colonization in the Mainland. However, Taiwan suffered from the Japanese Empire for 50 years after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 Colonial rule. Japan implemented Japanese in Taiwan Province, making it accept the daily life. Therefore, the influence of colonial aggression on the mainland is weak in breadth and depth, and Chinese culture has a strong sense of subjectivity. It is difficult for translators to upgrade their translation to the level of the construction of the main culture (Xunjian, 2003), so they can not effectively connect and deeply identify themselves with the identity of cultural creators. Because Taiwan had been invaded by foreign countries for a long time before and affected by a wide range of foreign cultures, the influence of foreign cultures on them is deeper, and the acceptance of Western foreign cultures by Taiwan people is also higher.

As for the differences in cultural factors, the first is the difference in culture and personality. Influenced by the closed and self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy, the Mainland area has formed a moderate and conservative mainland culture. Due to the influence of geographical environment, Taiwan has promoted the development of commodity economy and formed a strong marine culture characterized by mobility and openness, thus forming a bold and free cultural character (Su Chunyi, 2006).

The second is the difference of foreign culture acceptance. In history, the influence of Chinese culture on others is far more than that of foreign culture. In other words, the development of Chinese local culture is prosperous and stable, so the sense of cultural superiority arises spontaneously. Therefore, although the Chinese cultural system once declined to the edge, it has not been paid attention to (Zhang Nanfeng, 2001). In modern times, the traditional culture of the Mainland was strongly impacted by the Western foreign culture, but it did not shake its fundamental position. Although some foreign words have been added to modern Chinese to adapt to the development, the people are worried that the widespread use of foreign words will have a negative impact on the purity and independence of the native language. Moreover, the strong central consciousness of Chinese culture itself (Zha Mingjian, 2003) made it difficult to yield to foreign languages and be alienated. On the contrary, when absorbing the loanwords, the Chinese used loanwords as the "other" of cultural utilization for "cultural filtering and cultural transformation" (xunjian, 2003). As a result of the long period of colonial aggression, Taiwan has developed a multi-cultural culture and is more active and enthusiastic in absorbing foreign words. Therefore, in terms of cultural value, the translation of film titles in Taiwan is better than that in Chinese Mainland. Taiwan film translators has embodied the information value of the source culture in the target culture, or found equivalent cultural symbols between the source culture and the target culture (He Ying, 2001). For example, the film *Coco* is translated as *Keke Yezonghui* and *Yezonghui* meaning "grave" in Chinese can vividly point out the background of the film. Mexico's Day of the Dead, in contrast, is put into *Xun Meng*

Huanyou Ji in the Mainland translation conveying certain information, but in terms of cultural value equivalence, it is weaker than Taiwan's translation.

Big Fish is translated as *Da Zhi Ruo Yu* in Taiwan, originated from a Chinese idiom "Great wisdom is like a fool", perfectly reflecting the theme of the film. That "Great wisdom is like a fool" embodies a kind of philosophical wisdom in Chinese culture, which means that people with real wisdom are often regarded as stupid people because they have beyond ordinary people's understanding. Taiwan uses transliteration to replace *Yu* (愚) with *Yu* (鱼), which can not only reflect the spiritual core of the original film, but also cleverly integrates Chinese culture. This is an excellent case of the integration of Eastern and Western cultures.

Finally, the differences are involved in language composition. In the process of language development in Chinese Mainland and Taiwan, the obvious expansion of differences occurred after 1949 (Zhang Menghan, 2010). After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government is determined to achieve cultural unity and take Putonghua as the standard language of modern Chinese. But in Taiwan, there are three kinds of Chinese dialects: Minnan dialect, Hakka dialect and Han dialect dominated by northern dialect. The number of people who use Minnan dialect is as high as 12 million, accounting for about 80% of the total population in Fujian Province (Zhang Zhenxing, 1983). Therefore, Minnan dialect has a great influence in Taiwan. For example, the movie *Fight Club* is translated literally as *Boji Julebu* in Chinese Mainland and *Douzhen Julebu* in Taiwan. In Minnan language, "Douzhen" means to fight someone with the determination to death; in the Minnan language family, "Douzhen" means to start a relationship or become good friends. The standard of literal translation in Chinese Mainland reflects certain information of the film. However, Taiwan's translation achieves the equivalence of information value and cultural value at the same time, which is not only a club name, but also a metaphor of personality split. The relationship between the two protagonists seems to be friends rather than friends, and the ending reveals the struggle of dual personality.

2.3 The differences in the film market

Compared with the translated titles in Taiwan, those in Chinese Mainland tend to be more "appropriate", putting the information value of the translated titles in the first place, trying to reflect the main content of the original film, followed by aesthetic value and commercial value. While the main purpose of film translation in Taiwan is to obtain commercial value and maximize profit, and then consider information value, cultural value and aesthetic value. As for the cause and effect, the difference in the development level of the film market between the Chinese Mainland and Taiwan is one of the main reasons for the translation varieties.

After the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan in 1945, Taiwan began to implement the capitalist economic system, and the market economy developed rapidly. As an important industrial sector of market economy, film has developed into a relatively mature and perfect entertainment industry, with a high degree of marketization.

The commercial nature of the film has attracted much attention in Taiwan. As a clue of the film content, the title plays an important role in attracting people's attention and arousing interest. In order to arouse the audience's desire to watch and psychological identity, film manufacturers must make more efforts in the translation of film titles, so as to make the translated titles not only meet the actual needs of the film itself, but also meet the tastes and expectations of the audience, so as to achieve high box office, because the high box office can show that the film has achieved a certain degree of success (Shen Xuefu, 2013).

Therefore, compared with Chinese Mainland, the translation of English films in Taiwan is more open, more free translation or less literal translation, and flexibility is relatively strong. Sometimes the original name and content of the film are not considered at all, mainly to meet the visual and auditory stimulation of the audience, to stimulate the audience's desire to watch, to achieve high box office and meet the needs of commercialization. If a film has a high box office and get a good reputation after its release, the translation of several film titles will follow the same mode. For example, there is a series of movies named by "Shengui XX" (神鬼 XX), in which

Catch Me If You Can is translated into "*Shen Gui Jiaofeng*" (神鬼交锋), *The Bourne Ultimatum* is translated into "*Shen Gui Renzheng: Zuihou Tongdie*" (神鬼认证: 最后通牒); and also "XX Ling" (XX 令) : *Léon* is translated into "*Zhongji Zhuisha Ling*"(终极追杀令), and *Pulp Fiction* is translated into "*Heise Zhuiji Ling*" (黑色追緝令). In addition, in order to gain attention and increase audience rating, the translated titles of Taiwan films are often exaggerated. They are often characterized by unrestrained free translation, unrestrained and unconstrained, and they use a large number of unreasonably stimulating or sensational words. For example, the *The Usual Suspects* is translated into "*Ciji Jingbao Dian*" (刺激惊爆点) and *Triangle* is translated into "*Wangyang Xue Migong*" (汪洋血迷宫).

In the 30 years since the founding of new China in 1949, the Mainland has strictly followed the planned economic system, with politics as the dominant social order and the principle to management art, which mainly focused on the political education function of culture (Mao Shaoying, 2010). After the implementation of the reform and opening up policy in 1978, the market gradually began to play a role in the mainland, and the cultural market and politics gradually separated, forming a relatively independent and highly valued field. As a part of the cultural market, the film market has experienced a process of development from scratch, and with the further deepening of marketization, its development is more in line with the law of the market. So far, although the development of the film market is fruitful and prosperous, due to the short opening time, the relevant systems, laws and systems need to be improved.

As an immature industry, the film industry in Chinese Mainland is inevitably affected by ideology. Compared with other characteristics (political characteristics, educational characteristics, etc.), the commercial nature of the films does not occupy an absolute advantage. As for the Chinese translation of English film titles, the commercial nature of the translated titles is not prominent, but the more important thing is to consider the relevant political and cultural factors.

Therefore, when translating film titles, the translators do not put the commerciality in the first place, but stick to the golden mean, reflecting the content of the film as much as possible, that is, paying attention to the information value of the translated titles. Taking *The Shawshank Redemption* as an example, Chinese Mainland translated it into *Xiaoshenke De Jiushu* (肖申克的救赎), which directly pointed out the location of the story and hinted at the plot. In addition, the use of literal translation and the importance of information value are also reflected in different translation names, such as *American Beauty* translated into "*Meiguo Liren*" (美国丽人), *I am Sam* translated into "*Wo Shi Shanmu*" (我是山姆).

Generally speaking, the translators in Chinese Mainland were usually rigorous and prudent in translating film titles, always taking into account national conditions and ideology. Therefore, Chinese translation was often neutral and stable, which was in line with the appreciation psychology of the audience (Liu Li, 2008).

3. Conclusion

To sum up, the film titles should fully, appropriately and correctly reflect the information value of the film. In order to realize the reflection of the target culture on the cultural symbol information in the source culture, an excellent translation can realize the successful docking of cultural symbols between the source culture and the target culture. It should also have the aesthetic concept output acceptable to the audience, so that the film translation can meet the cultural conditions of the specific region. The production of film translation should also meet the interests of film makers, attract the audience's attention, and achieve the double harvest of box office and reputation. Exploring the causes of the translation varieties, whether the cross-strait economy, culture, policy or language, can broaden the translator's perspective on the study of film title translation, guide the standardization of film title translation, and promote the cross-strait cultural exchanges and mutual learning,

seeking common ground while reserving differences, and mutual tolerance.

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