

**LEXICAL FEATURES AND TRANSLATION OF  
CULTURAL REFERENCES IN THE CHINESE  
SUBTITLES OF SELECTED FEATURE AND  
ANIMATED FEATURE FILMS**

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by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>LIST OF SCREENSHOTS .....</b>	<b>xvi</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>xviii</b>
<b>ABSTRAK .....</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>xxi</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study .....	10
1.4 Research Questions .....	10
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	12
1.6 Limitations of the Study.....	15
1.7 Definitions of Key Terms .....	17
1.8 Organization of the Chapters .....	20
1.9 Summary of Chapter One .....	21
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Audiovisual Translation.....	22
2.3 Subtitling.....	26
2.4 Corpus-based Audiovisual Translation Studies .....	30
2.5 Translated Lexical features .....	33

2.5.1	Translational Universals .....	35
2.5.1(a)	Simplification .....	35
2.5.1(b)	Explicitation .....	37
2.5.1(c)	Normalization.....	39
2.5.1(d)	Levelling Out and Interference .....	40
2.5.1(e)	Summary of Translational Universals.....	41
2.5.2	Parameters of Measuring Translated Lexical Features .....	42
2.5.3	Specific Lexical Items.....	47
2.5.3(a)	Forms of Address .....	47
2.5.3(b)	Modal Particles.....	49
2.5.3(c)	Vulgarism.....	50
2.6	Cultural References.....	51
2.6.1	Classification of Cultural References in Translation .....	51
2.6.2	Cultural References in Subtitling.....	54
2.7	Translation Strategies of Cultural References .....	58
2.7.1	Models of Translation Strategies of Cultural References .....	58
2.7.2	Translation Strategies of Cultural References in Subtitling.....	64
2.8	Related Theories .....	70
2.8.1	Descriptive Translation Studies .....	71
2.8.2	Norms of Translation .....	75
2.9	Review of Related Studies .....	79
2.9.1	Related Studies on Lexical Features of Translated Language .....	79
2.9.2	Related Studies on Cultural References in Subtitles.....	84
2.10	Theoretical Framework of the Study .....	89
2.11	Conceptual Framework of the Study .....	91
2.12	Summary of Chapter Two.....	93
	<b>CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>95</b>

3.1	Introduction.....	95
3.2	Research Design.....	95
3.3	Corpus of the Study .....	97
3.3.1	Corpus Design.....	97
3.3.2	Design of the Comparable Corpus.....	99
3.3.3	Design of the Parallel Corpus .....	105
3.3.4	Justifications for the Corpus .....	111
3.3.5	Justifications for Selection of the Films.....	112
3.4	Corpus Analysis Tools.....	114
3.4.1	Antconc .....	115
3.4.2	WordSmith.....	115
3.4.3	UAM Corpus Tool .....	116
3.5	Research Procedures of the Study.....	117
3.6	Methods of Data Collection .....	118
3.7	Data Analysis .....	120
3.7.1	Methods of Data Analysis.....	120
3.7.2	Validity and Reliability.....	123
3.8	Research Matrix .....	125
3.9	Summary of Chapter Three.....	127
	<b>CHAPTER 4 RESULTS.....</b>	<b>128</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	128
4.2	Results of Research Question 1: What are the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles in the selected feature films and animated feature films?.....	128
4.2.1	Lexical Density .....	129
4.2.2	Type of Token Ratio (TTR).....	131
4.2.3	Lexical Variation.....	132
4.2.4	High-frequency Words in the Self-built Corpus.....	133

4.2.5	Specific Lexical Items.....	134
4.2.5(a)	Forms of Address in Feature Films .....	134
4.2.5(b)	Modal Particles in Feature Films .....	138
4.2.5(c)	Vulgarism in Feature Films.....	140
4.2.5(d)	Forms of Address in Animated Feature Films .....	143
4.2.5(e)	Modal Particles in Animated Feature Films.....	146
4.2.5(f)	Vulgarism in Animated Feature Films .....	148
4.3	Results of Research Question 2: What are the differences between the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles in the selected feature films and animated feature films?.....	149
4.3.1	Parameters Between Feature Films and Animated Feature Films .....	149
4.3.2	Specific Lexical Items Between Translated Feature Films and Translated Animated Feature Films .....	151
4.3.2(a)	Forms of Address Between Translated Feature Films and Translated Animated Feature Films .....	151
4.3.2(b)	Modal Particles Between Translated Feature Films and Translated Animated Feature Films .....	154
4.3.2(c)	Vulgarisms Between Translated Feature Films and Translated Animated Feature Films .....	157
4.4	Results of Research Question 3: What are the distributions of cultural references in the selected feature films and animated feature films?.....	160
4.4.1	Distributions of Cultural References in Feature Films .....	160
4.4.1(a)	<i>Green Book</i> .....	160
4.4.1(a)(i)	Distributions of Cultural References in <i>Green Book</i> .....	161
4.4.1(b)	<i>The King's Speech</i> .....	163
4.4.1(b)(i)	Distributions of Cultural References in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	164
4.4.1(c)	<i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	166
4.4.1(c)(i)	Distributions of Cultural References in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	167

4.4.2	Distribution of Cultural References in Animated Feature Films .....	169
4.4.2(a)	<i>Inside Out</i> .....	169
4.4.2(a)(i)	Distribution of Cultural References in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	170
4.4.2(b)	<i>Zootopia</i> .....	173
4.4.2(b)(i)	Distribution of Cultural References in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	173
4.4.2(c)	<i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	175
4.4.2(c)(i)	Distribution of Cultural References in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	176
4.4.3	Conclusion of Distribution of Cultural References in the Selected Films .....	178
4.5	Results of Research Question 4: What are the subtitling strategies adopted in translating cultural references in the selected feature films and animated feature films? .....	180
4.5.1	Translation Strategies for Cultural References in the Feature Films .....	181
4.5.1(a)	Translation Strategies for Cultural References in <i>Green Book</i> .....	181
4.5.1(a)(i)	Loan .....	181
4.5.1(a)(ii)	Literal translation.....	181
4.5.1(a)(iii)	Explicitation.....	182
4.5.1(a)(iv)	Substitution .....	184
4.5.1(a)(v)	Transposition .....	185
4.5.1(a)(vi)	Lexical recreation .....	186
4.5.1(a)(vii)	Paraphrase.....	186
4.5.1(a)(viii)	Condensation .....	187
4.5.1(a)(ix)	A Summary of Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>Green Book</i> .....	188
4.5.1(b)	Translation strategies for cultural references in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	189



4.5.1(b)(i)	Literal translation.....	189
4.5.1(b)(ii)	Explicitation.....	190
4.5.1(b)(iii)	Substitution.....	192
4.5.1(b)(iv)	Transposition .....	194
4.5.1(b)(v)	Paraphrase and Condensation.....	195
4.5.1(b)(vi)	A Summary of Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	198
4.5.1(c)	Translation Strategies of Cultural References in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	199
4.5.1(c)(i)	Literal Translation.....	199
4.5.1(c)(ii)	Explicitation.....	200
4.5.1(c)(iii)	Substitution.....	202
4.5.1(c)(iv)	Paraphrase.....	203
4.5.1(c)(v)	Omission.....	205
4.5.1(c)(vi)	Other Translation Strategies .....	206
4.5.1(c)(vii)	A Summary of Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	207
4.5.2	Translation Strategies for Cultural References in the Animated Feature Films.....	208
4.5.2(a)	Translation Strategies for Cultural References in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	208
4.5.2(a)(i)	Literal Translation.....	208
4.5.2(a)(ii)	Explicitation.....	209
4.5.2(a)(iii)	Paraphrase and Condensation.....	210
4.5.2(a)(iv)	Substitution and Lexical Recreation.....	212
4.5.2(a)(v)	A Summary of Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	214
4.5.2(b)	Translation Strategies for Cultural References in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	214
4.5.2(b)(i)	Literal Translation.....	214

4.5.2(b)(ii)	Explicitation.....	215
4.5.2(b)(iii)	Paraphrase.....	217
4.5.2(b)(iv)	Substitution.....	219
4.5.2(b)(v)	Lexical Recreation, Condensation and Omission .....	220
4.5.2(b)(vi)	A Summary of Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	221
4.5.2(c)	Translation Strategies for Cultural References in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	222
4.5.2(c)(i)	Literal Translation.....	222
4.5.2(c)(ii)	Paraphrase.....	223
4.5.2(c)(iii)	Lexical Recreation .....	225
4.5.2(c)(iv)	Other Translation Strategies: Substitution and Condensation .....	226
4.5.2(c)(v)	A Summary of Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	227
4.6	Results of Research Question 5: What are the differences of subtitling strategies between translating cultural references of the selected feature films and animated feature films? .....	228
4.7	Summary of Chapter Four.....	232
<b>CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....</b>		<b>233</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	233
5.2	Overview .....	233
5.3	Discussion of the Findings.....	235
5.3.1	Major Findings of Research Questions.....	235
5.3.2	Discussion to Research Question One .....	237
5.3.2(a)	Discussion to the Results of Four Parameters .....	237
5.3.2(b)	Discussion to the Results of Specific Items .....	240
5.3.3	Discussion to Research Question Two.....	244
5.3.4	Discussion to Research Question Three.....	248

5.3.5	Discussion to Research Question Four .....	250
5.3.6	Discussion to Research Question Five.....	251
5.4	Contributions of the Study .....	253
5.5	Practical Recommendations .....	258
5.5.1	Practical Recommendations for English Learners .....	258
5.5.2	Practical Recommendations for Subtitlers.....	260
5.6	Suggestions for Future Research .....	262
5.7	Conclusion .....	264
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>		<b>266</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>		

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 2.1	Summary of the Classification of Audiovisual Translation .....24
Table 2.2	Description of the Hypothesis of Translational Universals.....35
Table 2.3	Corpus of Lexical Parameters used in Xiao and Hu (2015) Study and Pavesi et al. (2015) Study .....44
Table 2.4	Personal Pronouns in Chinese from (Zhang et al., 2020) .....48
Table 2.5	Commonly Used Modal Particles.....49
Table 2.6	Classification of Swear Words (Abdelaal & Al Sarhani, 2021).....50
Table 2.7	Summary of Classifications of Cultural References.....54
Table 2.8	Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020) Taxonomy of Cultural Reference in Subtitling .....57
Table 2.9	Models of Translation Strategies of Cultural References.....59
Table 2.10	Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2020) Model of Subtitling Strategies of Cultural Reference.....67
Table 2.11	Comparison of Toury (2012) and Chesterman (2016) Norms .....78
Table 3.1	English Films Used in Comparable Corpus .....102
Table 3.2	Chinese Films Used in Comparable Corpus.....104
Table 3.3	English Films Used in Parallel Corpus.....107
Table 3.4	Research Matrix.....125
Table 4.1	Number of Content Words in the Self-built Corpora .....130
Table 4.2	Lexical Density in the Self-built Corpora.....130
Table 4.3	Type of Token Ratio and Standardized Type-token Ratio in the Self-built Corpora .....132
Table 4.4	Lexical Variation in the Self-built Corpora.....133
Table 4.5	Forms of Address in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of Chinese Feature Films .....136

Table 4.6	Modal Particles in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of Chinese Feature Films .....	139
Table 4.7	Vulgar Words in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of Chinese Feature Films .....	142
Table 4.8	Forms of Address in Corpus of Chinese Animated Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....	144
Table 4.9	Modal Particles in Corpus of Chinese Animated Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....	147
Table 4.10	Vulgarism in Corpus of Chinese Animated Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....	148
Table 4.11	Three Values in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....	150
Table 4.12	Forms of Address in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....	152
Table 4.13	Modal Particles in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....	155
Table 4.14	Vulgarisms in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films.....	158
Table 4.15	Distributions of Geographical References in <i>Green Book</i> .....	161
Table 4.16	Distributions of Ethnographic References in <i>Green Book</i> .....	162
Table 4.17	Distributions of Socio-political References in <i>Green Book</i> .....	163
Table 4.18	Distributions of Geographical References in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	165
Table 4.19	Distributions of Ethnographic References in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	165
Table 4.20	Distributions of Socio-political References in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	166
Table 4.21	Distributions of Geographical References in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	168
Table 4.22	Distributions of Ethnographic References in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	168
Table 4.23	Distributions of Socio-political References in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	169
Table 4.24	Distribution of Geographical References in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	171

Table 4.25	Distribution of Ethnographic References in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	172
Table 4.26	Distribution of Socio-political References in <i>Inside out</i> .....	172
Table 4.27	Distribution of Geographical References in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	174
Table 4.28	Distribution of Ethnographic References in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	174
Table 4.29	Distribution of Socio-political References in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	175
Table 4.30	Distribution of Geographical References in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	176
Table 4.31	Distribution of Ethnographic References in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	177
Table 4.32	Distribution of Socio-political References in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	178
Table 4.33	Distribution of Cultural References in the Selected Films .....	179
Table 4.34	Examples of Literal Translation Strategy for CRs in <i>Green Book</i> .....	182
Table 4.35	Explicitation Strategy for CRs in <i>Green Book</i> .....	183
Table 4.36	Substitution Strategy for CRs in <i>Green Book</i> .....	185
Table 4.37	Paraphrase Strategy for CRs in <i>Green Book</i> .....	187
Table 4.38	Distributions of Translation Strategies in <i>Green Book</i> .....	189
Table 4.39	Examples of Literal Translation for CRs in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	190
Table 4.40	Explicitation for CRs in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	191
Table 4.41	Substitution for CRs in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	193
Table 4.42	Paraphrase for CRs in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	196
Table 4.43	Distributions of Translation Strategies in <i>The King's Speech</i> .....	199
Table 4.44	Examples of Literal Translation for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	200
Table 4.45	Explicitation for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	201
Table 4.46	Substitution for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	202
Table 4.47	Paraphrase for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	204
Table 4.48	Omission for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	205

Table 4.49	Other Translation Strategies for CRs in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	207
Table 4.50	Distributions of Translation Strategies in <i>No Country for Old Men</i> .....	207
Table 4.51	Examples of Literal Translation for CRs in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	208
Table 4.52	Explicitation for CRs in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	210
Table 4.53	Paraphrase for CRs in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	211
Table 4.54	Condensation for CRs in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	212
Table 4.55	Substitution and Lexical recreation for CRs in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	213
Table 4.56	Distributions of Translation Strategies in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	214
Table 4.57	Examples of Literal Translation for CRs in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	215
Table 4.58	Explicitation for CRs in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	216
Table 4.59	Paraphrase for CRs in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	218
Table 4.60	Substitution for CRs in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	219
Table 4.61	Distributions of Translation Strategies in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	222
Table 4.62	Examples of Literal Translation for CRs in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	223
Table 4.63	Paraphrase for CRs in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	224
Table 4.64	Lexical Recreation for CRs in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	225
Table 4.65	Distributions of Translation Strategies in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	228
Table 4.66	A General Picture of Translation Strategies in the Selected Films .....	229
Table 5.1	Subtitling Strategies for English-Mandarin Subtitling .....	255

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1	Holmes’s ‘Map’ of Translation Studies (Munday, 2016, p.17).....72
Figure 2.2	Theoretical Framework of the Present Study .....90
Figure 2.3	Conceptual Framework of the Study .....93
Figure 3.1	Corpus Design .....99
Figure 3.2	Sample of the Segmented Text of Chinese Subtitle .....109
Figure 3.3	Sample of the Aligned Text for the Parallel Corpora .....110
Figure 3.4	Design of the Parallel Corpus .....110
Figure 3.5	Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis .....118
Figure 3.6	Methods of Data Collection.....120
Figure 4.1	Lexical Words of Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films .....149
Figure 4.2	Frequency of Forms of Address in CEFF and CEAFF .....154
Figure 4.3	Frequency of Modal Particles in CEFF and CEAFF .....157
Figure 4.4	Frequency of Vulgarism in CEFF and CEAFF .....159
Figure 4.5	Differences of Cultural References between feature and animated feature films .....180
Figure 4.6	Explicitation of Feature Films and Animated Feature Films .....230
Figure 5.1	An Overview of the Three Parameters in the Four Corpora.....238



## LIST OF SCREENSHOTS

	Page
Screenshot 1    Subtitle of “AAA” in <i>Green Book</i> .....	184
Screenshot 2    Subtitle of “Shake” in <i>The King’s Speech</i> .....	192
Screenshot 3    Subtitle of “Herr Hitler” in <i>The King’s Speech</i> .....	194
Screenshot 4    Subtitle of “a thistle-sifter” in <i>The King’s Speech</i> .....	195
Screenshot 5    Subtitle of “antipodean methods” in <i>The King’s Speech</i> .....	197
Screenshot 6    Subtitle of “Mr. Guy Trundle” in <i>The King’s Speech</i> .....	198
Screenshot 7    Subtitle of “cookie” in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	210
Screenshot 8    Subtitle of “Defcon two” in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	211
Screenshot 9    Subtitle of “mind workers” in <i>Inside Out</i> .....	213
Screenshot 10   Subtitle of “Officer Hopps” in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	217
Screenshot 11   Subtitle of “Jumbo Pop” in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	218
Screenshot 12   Subtitle of “Carrots” in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	220
Screenshot 13   Subtitle of “astronaut” in <i>Zootopia</i> .....	221
Screenshot 14   Subtitle of “veterans” in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	224
Screenshot 15   Subtitle of “Slink” in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	226
Screenshot 16   Subtitle of “the Great White North” in <i>Toy Story 4</i> .....	227

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVT	Audio Visual Translation
CCFF	Corpus of Chinese Feature Films
CCAFF	Corpus of Chinese Animated Feature Films
CEAFF	Corpus of English Animated Feature Films
CEFF	Corpus of English Feature Films
CTS	Corpus-based Translation Studies
CSIs	Culture-specific Items
CRs	Cultural References
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
ECR	Extralinguistic Culture-bound reference
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
TUs	Translation Universals

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	High-frequency words in Corpus of English Feature Films and Corpus of Chinese Feature Films
Appendix B	High-frequency words in Corpus of English Animated Feature Films and Corpus of Chinese Animated Feature Films
Appendix C	Cultural References in <i>Green Book</i>
Appendix D	Cultural References in <i>The King's Speech</i>
Appendix E	Cultural References in <i>No Country For Old Men</i>
Appendix F	Cultural References in <i>Inside Out</i>
Appendix G	Cultural References in <i>Zootopia</i>
Appendix H	Cultural References in <i>Toy Story 4</i>
Appendix I	Cultural References of Literal Translation Strategy in <i>Green Book</i>
Appendix J	Cultural References of Explicitation Strategy in <i>Green Book</i>
Appendix K	Cultural References of Literal Translation Strategy in <i>The King's Speech</i>
Appendix L	Cultural References of Explicitation Strategy in <i>The King's Speech</i>
Appendix M	Cultural References of Literal Translation Strategy in <i>No Country for Old Men</i>
Appendix N	Cultural References of Explicitation Strategy in <i>No Country for Old Men</i>
Appendix O	Cultural References of Literal Translation Strategy in <i>Inside Out</i>
Appendix P	Cultural References of Literal Translation Strategy in <i>Zootopia</i>
Appendix Q	Cultural References of Paraphrase Strategy in <i>Zootopia</i>
Appendix R	Cultural References of Literal Translation Strategy in <i>Toy Story 4</i>
Appendix S	Cultural References of Lexical Recreation Strategy in <i>Toy Story 4</i>
Appendix T	Cultural References of Explicitation Strategy in Feature films and Animated Feature Films

# **CIRI LEKSIKAL DAN TERJEMAHAN RUJUKAN BUDAYA DALAM SARI KATA FILEM CETERA BAHASA CINA DAN ANIMASI TERPILIH**

## **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini menangani kekurangan dalam penyelidikan dengan menyelidiki kajian terjemahan berbasis korpus, khususnya dalam konteks Cina bagi subtitling. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka ciri leksikal, pengedaran rujukan budaya dan strategi subtitling bagi rujukan budaya dalam sari kata Cina terjemahan dari filem cereka dan filem animasi cereka dengan menggunakan kaedah korpus. Kajian ini menganalisis korpus yang setara sari kata Cina terjemahan dari filem cereka bahasa Inggeris dan sari kata Cina asli, serta korpus selari sari kata dwibahasa (Bahasa Inggeris dan Cina) dari kedua-dua filem cereka dan filem animasi cereka. Ciri-ciri leksikal sari kata Cina terjemahan telah dikaji menggunakan parameter yang dicadangkan oleh Pavesi et al. (2015). Selanjutnya, tiga item leksikal tertentu, iaitu bentuk panggilan, partikel modal dan vulgarisme yang diringkaskan oleh penyelidik juga digunakan untuk menyelidik ciri leksikal sari kata Cina terjemahan. Selain itu, pengelasan rujukan budaya dan strategi subtitling mereka dianalisis dengan mengadopsi taksonomi rujukan budaya dan model strategi subtitling oleh Díaz-Cintas dan Remael (2020). Data dianalisis menggunakan alat korpus seperti WordSmith, Antconc dan UAM Corpus Tool. Penemuan utama dari analisis korpus menunjukkan bahawa sari kata Cina terjemahan memperlihatkan ciri-ciri penyederhanaan leksikal dalam kedua-dua filem cereka terjemahan dan filem animasi cereka. Selanjutnya, penyelidikan terhadap tiga item leksikal tertentu menunjukkan bahawa sari kata Cina asli menggunakan lebih banyak bentuk panggilan dan partikel modal berbanding sari kata Cina terjemahan. Sebaliknya, sari

kata Cina terjemahan mempunyai vulgarisme yang lebih sedikit berbanding sari kata asli. Dari segi pengedaran rujukan budaya, rujukan etnografi dalam taksonomi Díaz-Cintas dan Remael (2020) mengandungi lebih banyak rujukan budaya berbanding rujukan geografi atau rujukan sosio-politik. Selain itu, kajian menunjukkan bahawa strategi terjemahan rujukan budaya dalam filem cereka dan filem animasi cereka adalah berbeza, dan model yang diadopsi untuk subtitling rujukan budaya tidak sepenuhnya boleh diaplikasikan kepada subtitling Inggeris-Mandarin. Berdasarkan penemuan kajian ini, penulis mencadangkan lapan strategi subtitling untuk subtitling Inggeris-Mandarin. Penemuan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi praktikal dan teori untuk pelajar bahasa Inggeris dan penyunting sari kata, serta menyediakan maklumat untuk penyelidikan masa depan dalam bidang kajian terjemahan audiovisual berbasis korpus.

**LEXICAL FEATURES AND TRANSLATION OF CULTURAL  
REFERENCES IN THE CHINESE SUBTITLES OF SELECTED FEATURE  
AND ANIMATED FEATURE FILMS**

**ABSTRACT**

This study addresses a gap in research by delving into corpus-based translation studies, specifically in the Chinese context of subtitling. The objective of this study is to explore the lexical features, distribution of cultural references and subtitling strategies of cultural references in translated Chinese subtitles from feature films and animated feature films by means of corpora methods. The study analysed comparable corpora of translated Chinese subtitles from English feature films and native Chinese subtitles, alongside parallel corpora of bilingual subtitles (English and Chinese) from both feature films and animated feature films. The lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles were examined by using the parameters proposed by Pavesi et al. (2015). Furthermore, three specific lexical items, namely, forms of address, modal particles and vulgarism summarized by the researcher are also employed to investigate lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles. Further, the classification of cultural references and their subtitling strategies are analysed by adopting Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020) taxonomy of cultural references and model of subtitling strategies. The data were analysed by corpus tools of WordSmith, Antconc and UAM Corpus Tool. The major findings of the corpora analysis reveal that translated Chinese subtitles exhibit features of lexical simplification in both translated feature films and animated feature films. Further, the investigation of the three specific lexical items reveals native Chinese subtitles use more forms of address and modal particles compared to translated Chinese subtitles. In contrast,

translated Chinese subtitles have fewer vulgarisms than native subtitles. In terms of the distribution of cultural references, ethnographic references in Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2020) taxonomy contain a greater number of cultural references than geographical references or socio-political references. Moreover, the study shows that the translation strategies of cultural references in feature films and animated feature films are different, and the adopted model for subtitling cultural references are not fully applicable to English-Mandarin subtitling. Based on the study's findings, the author proposes eight subtitling strategies for English-Mandarin subtitling. The findings of this study have both practical and theoretical implications for English learners and subtitlers, as well as provide information for future research in the field of corpus-based audiovisual translation studies.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The proliferation of audio-visual content has spawned since communication technology has become part and parcel of social life. With the mutually shaping relationship between audiovisual translation (AVT) and technological innovation, it has become necessary to construct robust theoretical frameworks to assist with conceptualizing various text types (Munday, 2016; Pérez-González, 2014). As a result of this technological development, audiovisual translation has occupied the centre of the research in translation and has emerged as one of the rapidly expanding strands of translation studies in the last few decades (Pérez-González, 2014).

Film, as a massively popular cultural media, is an excellent vehicle for examining and developing visual literacy. Furthermore, foreign films in particular provide a valuable form for examining intercultural competence, since it is one of the primary ways that the audience are exposed to different cultural discourses (Kim, 2020; Pegrum et al., 2005). The visual medium of film brings together language, culture, and environment, and is a fantastic way to begin to see the world from different cultural perspectives (Pegrum, 2008). Popular cultural media like films, which often depict specific social settings, can be a valuable source of cultural information (Chao, 2013). Numerous scholars have emphasized the benefits of watching foreign films. For example, original English films easily enable viewers to immerse themselves into an exotic culture and are also an excellent choice for English learners to learn English by positioning themselves in true life (Kim, 2020; Yves & Jin, 2018). In addition, films provide learners with multidimensional cultural



input that can further improve their intercultural competency (Black, 2022; Roell, 2010). Furthermore, movies vividly portray the fears, dreams, frustrations, and expectations of the average person, which enhances the viewers' emotions, such as their ability to be empathic and nonjudgmental toward others (Chao, 2013). Additionally, audience can gain insight into different cultures by observing and conversing about diverse discourses, cultural themes, and international events depicted in films. This may lead to more effective intercultural communication in the future (Pegrum, 2008; Roell, 2010).

It has been pointed out that the field of AVT has dominated research during the past decade, especially in the field of subtitling, which is among one of the fastest developing and dynamic areas of translation studies (Díaz-Cintas & Anderman, 2008; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2020; Munday, 2016; Perego & Pacinotti, 2020). Even though the recognition of AVT as an independent research field and discipline has long been absent from academic attention until 1980s-1990s (Díaz-Cintas, 2004b; Díaz-Cintas & Neves, 2015; Perego & Pacinotti, 2020), the golden age of AVT in every aspect has been seen in the twenty-first century, and scholars began to build links of epistemology between AVT and translation studies (Chaume, 2013). Escudero (2018) claimed that more than 4000 reports and 330 doctoral theses on AVT were enlisted in BITRA (a database of Bibliography of Interpretation and Translation). The increasing academic interest in AVT has contributed to the first journal specialized in this issue in early 2018, the *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* (Bolaños-García-Escribano et al., 2021).

Studies of AVT have focused on various issues, such as AVT and accessibility (e.g., Bywood et al., 2017; Candel-Mora & González-Pastor, 2017), AVT and English learning (e.g., Talaván, 2010; Zheng et al., 2022), and corpus approach and AVT (e.g.,

Baños et al., 2013; Bruti, 2020). As one of the main branches of AVT, subtitling has been a hot topic that has recently attracted the attention of researchers. In essence, subtitling is the way of transferring a message from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL), which falls right into the traditional definition of a translation. It is becoming increasingly more preferable to use subtitles due to their credibility, cost-effectiveness, and enjoyment of the original sound (Debbas & Haider, 2020). In other words, it refers to the act of converting the original message into the target message to help prospective readers to comprehend unfamiliar idioms or cultural items (Bogucki & Díaz-Cintas, 2020). However, unlike literature, prose or poem translation, subtitling possesses its own features which can be attributed to its typical nature and constraints. All these require researchers to investigate subtitling through an interdisciplinary approach and to be well-equipped with knowledge of technology.

Early from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, foreign films have begun to be introduced into China. Before the late 20<sup>th</sup>, dubbing was the most favoured way of translating foreign films in China, since the majority of audience were with relatively low literacy and poor English ability (Yves & Jin, 2018). Since then, translated foreign films have had a significant influence on the development of Chinese society and culture (D. Wang & X. Zhang, 2017). Several phenomena have marked the development of AVT in China. For example, in order to promote studies and practice in AVT, Audiovisual Translation and Dissemination Council China was founded in 2017. Further, workshops on the field of AVT have been organized in China and a growing number of scholars and experts have been invited since 2015 to give talks and training on AVT (Yves & Jin, 2018). However, as an interdisciplinary field, AVT in China, including subtitling, is still one of the less explored fields of translation studies (Xiao & Peng, 2019). There are currently no unified national audiovisual

translation guidelines or standards, and academic monograph focused on AVT is rather rare (Xiao & Peng, 2019; Yves & Jin, 2018). Despite growing interest in AVT-related subjects, the majority of publications focusing on audiovisual translation studies are written in the Chinese language (Wang et al., 2020). While the AVT has grown into the mature stage in translation studies in the Western contexts (Wang et al., 2020), its development in China can only be seen as in the fledging period.

The nature of subtitle translation, different with other types of translation, was limited with many factors like pressure of the time and space and technical constraints (Díaz-Cintas, 2020; Gottlieb, 2012). The methodology of corpus-based AVT allows scholars to identify the particular characteristics and trends of translated texts, since a massive chunk of material is accessible (Pavesi, 2018; Pérez-González, 2014). Linguistic features, including lexical features of translated subtitle can thus be identified because of the collection and analysis of a large amount of data, further, the computer-assisted tools make it feasible to uncover patterns that seems impossible to detect from manual analysis (Baños et al., 2013).

As a pioneer of descriptive translation studies (DTS), Holmes (1988) claims that one of the objectives of translation studies is to “describe the phenomena of translating and translations as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience” (p. 71), and these empirical translation studies are called DTS. The topic of adopting theories of DTS in AVT studies has been researched by numerous scholars (e.g., Bogucki & Díaz-Cintas, 2020; Díaz-Cintas, 2004a; Gambier & Pinto, 2018; Rosa, 2016). As an important component of DTS, translation norms have also been adopted by numerous researchers in subtitling (e.g., Marčetić, 2016; Pedersen, 2011, 2018, 2020; Sarrión, 2009; Schäffner, 2010; Sokoli, 2009; Xavier, 2021). The current study, utilizing theories of descriptive translation studies and Toury (1995)’s

and Chesterman's translation norms, is an attempt to mainly examine the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles and translation strategies of CRs in English-Mandarin subtitles.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Subtitling has gained well-deserved attention since the 1990s as the audiovisual material continues to proliferate and spread (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014). From then on, film subtitling has always been a spotlight for researchers and has made enormous strides in these years (Abdelaal, 2019; Alfaify & Ramos Pinto, 2021; Debbas & Haider, 2020; Delfani, 2019). Not only for people to get entertainment, appreciating foreign films is also an important channel to know about foreign histories, cultures and customs. However, understanding a foreign film is demanding as the audience must decode the images and read the subtitle simultaneously. What is more important is that some cultural elements are usually tricky to be absorbed by the foreign audience (Kostopoulou, 2015). Thus, as one of the main roles of a film is to transmit cultures and customs, translation of cultural references (CRs) in the films is of great importance and has been researched by a host of researchers (e.g., Abdelaal, 2019; Alfaify & Ramos Pinto, 2021; Blažytė & Liubinienė, 2016; Delfani, 2019; Marco, 2019; Pavesi & Zamora, 2021).

In fact, researchers have noted that the translation of CRs is challenging as they always represent some deep-rooted cultural elements, which are unfamiliar or totally strange for foreign audience (Alfaify & Ramos Pinto, 2021). This is even more pronounced in subtitling due to some constraints such as limited space, limited time, and linguistic considerations (Millán & Bartrina, 2013). All these constraints make the translation of subtitles difficult as this has to be done to illuminate some

exotic cultures. The quality of the translation of CRs does make a significant difference to the overall picture of the film, and this point cannot be overstated.

Reviewing previous studies that have focused on subtitling, Chen (2019) divided these studies into four major categories: lexis-centred studies, audience-focused studies, norm-specified studies, and semiotic-oriented studies. Recent years have seen a growing interest in rendering culture-specific or language-specific elements in subtitling (e.g., Ghassemiazghandi & Tengku-Sepora, 2020; Kianbakht, 2021; Pai, 2020; Postigo, 2020). Regarding this issue, Aixelá (1996) points out that one of the most challenging areas in translation is the task of rendering of culture-specific items (CSIs). Further, she argued that CSIs pose problems in translation as these cultural items do not exist in the target language or have a different intertextual status in the target text. Researchers (e.g., Aixelá, 1996; Gottlieb, 1992; Pedersen, 2005) have proposed different translation strategy models for translating CSIs and have greatly influenced some researchers in their following research.

By reviewing previous studies in terms of subtitling, it can be observed that most of the research has been carried out by the analysis of translating English films into other languages. For instance, some studies have examined subtitle translation from English films into subtitles of Indonesian (Simanjuntak & Basari, 2016), Lithuanian (Horbačauskienė et al., 2016) or into Persian (Ghassemiazghandi & Tengku-Sepora, 2020). Relatively limited English studies have been published on English-Mandarin subtitling (e.g., Haikuo, 2015; Wu, 2021). This is in general representative of the research status of subtitle translation in China, which Xiao and Peng (2019) claim to be one of the least explored fields of translation studies in the country. From the researcher's perspective, it is highly recommended to conduct studies on subtitle translations from English to Mandarin.

Based on the review of previous studies (e.g., Díaz-Cintas, 2020; Gottlieb, 1992; Pedersen, 2011) on subtitling strategies, it can be concluded that the model or framework proposed by previous scholars are based on their individual cases. And there is still a lack of comprehensive studies or related frameworks or models for rendering English-Mandarin film subtitles. One example can be inferred from Pedersen (2005)'s influencing study. The translation strategies he coined for translating cultural references are based on individual cases from English films to Swedish or Danish subtitles. Another example is from Bywood (2019)'s study. He tested the retranslation hypothesis for audiovisual translation by investigating two German films with English subtitles. The strategies he used in this study are proposed by Pedersen (2011) and Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007). What is more,

Apart from that, research to date has not adequately addressed translation strategies for English films into Chinese subtitles based on film genres. Some studies have focused on various English film genres subtitled in other languages (e.g., Ghaemi & Benyamin, 2011; Okyayuz, 2016). For example, Ghaemi and Benyamin (2011) identified the interlingual strategies in translating English subtitles into Persian by analysing five different genres of English movies in Persian subtitles. However, there is some evidence to show that some studies have merely focused on specific genres of films for particular research purposes. For example, taboo language of films, as one of the cultural items, has attracted good attention of some researchers, who selected American crime films in their corpora to study the translation of taboo words or swearing (e.g., Ameri & Ghazizadeh, 2014; Khakshour Forutan & Modarresi, 2018). Therefore, systematic research for various films seems highly necessary, as film genres play a key part in adopting different strategies (Ghaemi & Benyamin, 2011).

Although lexis-centred studies have been considered as one of the primary orientations of subtitle research (Delfani, 2019; Ghassemiazghandi & Tengku-Sepora, 2020; Postigo, 2020), it is rare that previous studies utilized corpus-based analysis to examine translational Chinese subtitles. Corpus-based translation studies, or CTS, have made considerable achievement because of the influencing paradigm of Baker (1993). According to Baker and Saldanha (2004), CTS has been widely used in multiple translation research fields such as translation universals (TUs), translation features, and translators' styles. Researches on translational language features, including lexical features of translated languages have been a hot topic discussed by scholars around the world (e.g., Kenny, 2014; Szudarski, 2017; Zanettin, 2013).

The language in feature films is not completely the same as, even close to, naturally occurring speech (Brumme, 2008; Gimbert & Zabalbeascoa, 2011). However, the language profile of translated feature films has not been exhaustively explored, especially in Chinese context. In addition, the impact of animated films on children's language acquisition, cognitive, emotion, and behaviour have been documented in many previous studies (Rezeki, 2021; Singer, 2019; Soundararaj & Janakidas, 2020). From the perspective of AVT, the linguistic differences between translated subtitles of feature films and animated feature films deserves to be studied.

Scholars in China have also paid attention to lexical features of translated languages. Xiao and Hu (2015) suggested that when examining translational Chinese, researchers typically explore its overall lexical features by analysing parameters such as the type/token ratio (TTR), word lists, and keyword lists in both translated and non-translated corpora. Also see Hu and Kim (2020). However, although corpus-based studies in terms of lexical features have been conducted in various fields, such as translated Chinese novels (Xiao, 2010), translated Chinese popular science (Chen,

2006), translated Chinese legal language (Chan, 2007) or economic legal policy (Liu, 2022), there still is a lack of studies on lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles. In this sense, to fully examine translated subtitles, it is necessary to extensively combine subtitling studies with corpus-based studies.

According to Hu (2016), “lexical features of translated language involve overall features of lexical use and features in the use of specific words and phrases in translated texts (p.106)”. As Hu (2016) points out, many studies on lexical features of translated texts are confined to overall features of translated texts, and specific words or chunks of lexical structures should also be considered. In this study, forms of address, modal particles and vulgarism are specific words, which is another area in which there is a lack of research and is extensively examined in this study. An in-depth understanding of the correspondence between the source language and the target language can be gained by investigating the lexical features of translated texts. It is for this reason that the aim of this study is to examine the translated lexical features of selected films.

For the analysis of the data, Pavesi et al. (2015)’s parameters of analysing lexical features, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020)’s taxonomy of cultural reference in subtitling and Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020)’s model of subtitling strategies of cultural reference are employed in the current study. Based on these models, the present study aims at investigating translated Chinese subtitles and translating CRs of selected feature films and animated feature films in a relatively systematic way by means of corpus analysis. It seeks to analyse the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles through comparable corpora and try to explore the distribution of CRs and their translation strategies via parallel corpora. Subtitling strategies of translating CRs in English-Mandarin subtitle will be suggested at the end of this



research. The study of the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitle and translation strategies of CRs with the corpus method would be an attempt to fill the gap in both corpus-based studies and subtitling studies.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the lexical features of the translated Chinese subtitles of the selected feature films and animated feature films.
2. To examine whether the lexical features of the translated Chinese subtitles vary across the selected feature films and animated feature films.
3. To explore the distributions of cultural references in the selected feature films and animated feature films.
4. To analyse the subtitling strategies adopted in subtitling cultural references in the selected feature films and animated feature films.
5. To compare and analyse the differences in subtitling strategies among selected feature films and animated feature films.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles in the selected feature films and animated feature films?
2. What are the differences between the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles in the selected feature films and animated feature films?
3. What are the distributions of cultural references in the selected feature

films and animated feature films?

4. What are the subtitling strategies adopted in translating cultural references in the selected feature films and animated feature films?
5. What are the differences of subtitling strategies between translating cultural references of the selected feature films and animated feature films?

The RQ 1 and RQ 2 are different research questions and focus on different research objectives. RQ 1 examines lexical features of translated feature films by comparing native Chinese feature films and translated feature films; it also explores lexical features of translated animated feature films with the comparison of native Chinese animated feature films and translated animated feature films. While RQ2 focuses on comparing lexical features between subtitles of translated feature films and translated animated feature films.

Lexical features could differ between feature films and animated feature films due to differences in dialogue style, target audience, cultural context, and narrative complexity. Exploring the differences between the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles in feature films and animated feature films may involve a detailed examination, and combining the questions might dilute the depth of analysis required for each genre.

The same reasons with the separate analysis of RQ 4 and RQ 5. The subtitling strategies employed in translating cultural references in feature films and animated feature films could differ because of various factors such as the nature of the content, the target audience, and the cultural context. RQ 5 seeks to explore the differences in subtitling strategies between feature films and animated feature films, this

comparison can be more effectively conducted when the strategies within each genre are thoroughly examined first. Keeping the questions separate facilitates a comparative analysis that highlights the unique approaches and challenges faced in subtitling cultural references in each type of film.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Films play an essential part in entertainment and are a significant way to transmit socio-cultural information. Today, a growing number of people see watching foreign movies as a helpful way to gain English vocabulary and expressions and to know about foreign cultures (Kanellopoulou et al., 2019; Munir, 2016). This study adopts a corpus-based method to systematically analyse selected feature films and animated feature films. It investigates academic aspects pertaining to lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles, categories of cultural references in subtitles, and translation strategies of subtitling cultural references. The significance of this research includes the following aspects.

Firstly, this study attempts to fill the gap in research that have focused on translated Chinese subtitles and the gap in studies on lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles. Chinese scholars have begun to study translation in a systematic way by using corpora-based methods since Baker (1993) proposes corpus linguistics in translation studies. In the following decades, empirical studies, especially corpus-based analyses of lexical features in the Chinese context have become readily accessible. However, studies regarding the translation of Chinese subtitles remain largely untouched. Previous studies have examined the features of translated Chinese texts by means of corpora, such as explicitation, simplification, and normalization based on parameters such as lexical density and information load (Hu & Kim, 2020).

Despite this, there has not yet been a study that examines the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles on the basis of corpus-based data. Consequently, the findings of this study will contribute to filling a gap in translated Chinese subtitles and studies on lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles.

Secondly, analysing the lexical features of the translated Chinese subtitles is an effective way to investigate translated Chinese subtitles. In the view of Hu (2016), studying the usage of particular terms and expressions in translated texts allows us to gain a better understanding of the correspondence between the source and target languages as well as translation strategies utilized by translators. Therefore, it may provide trustworthy evidence for the research of Translational Universals (TUs) of translated Chinese subtitles. Besides, a focused exploration into specific lexical terms, forms of address, modal particles and vulgarism would further enrich the findings of the features within translated Chinese subtitles. Furthermore, the comparative analysis between feature films and animated feature films has the potential to yield novel findings, serving as a valuable reference for subtitlers. As the translators have to abide by the norms of usefulness and comprehensibility from the viewpoint of target culture when translating children's material (O'Connell, 2003).

Thirdly, this study offers important insights to those who prefer to learn English by watching English films or to audiovisual classroom. Studying categories of CRs of selected films is a meaningful attempt to identify the distribution of CRs in the films. To some extent, the findings of this study can provide a general picture to the learners and guide them to pay more attention to a particular category of cultural words in learning vocabularies from films. According to Dios (2011), multimedia corpora can be used in a variety of pedagogical situations, ranging from "general

language courses dealing with jargon and register” to “specialized courses dealing with AVT and subtitling” (p.4).

Fourthly, identification of the translation strategies of translated Chinese subtitles can provide a solid basis for future research in the subject of translators’ behaviour or translator’s aesthetic psychology. Subtitling does not permit immediate solutions for untranslatable terms, unlike other forms of written translation. Footnotes, glosses, and a variety of other translation strategies can be used to explain some culture-bound terminology in other types of translation. However, none of these solutions are available in subtitling (Abdelaal, 2019; Zojer, 2011). For translators, it will be imperative to identify cultural references and consider them during translation. Further, a study of translation strategies and methodologies would provide an indication of the aesthetic psychology of a translator, the effect of cultural psychology on a translator, and the frame of mind the translator takes into account when interacting with both the source text and the reader of the target text (Hu & Kim, 2020).

Fifthly, the present study attempts to conclude a framework for translating strategies of English-Mandarin subtitles, which is the theoretical contribution. Generally, taxonomy used for analysing and classifying cultural references are the result of studies conducted on European languages and contexts (Alfaify & Ramos Pinto, 2021). Currently, there is no model for describing translation strategies for English-Mandarin subtitles in cultural references. It is hoped that the findings of the model of translation strategies will help bridge the gap and contribute to the development of subtitle translation in China. In addition to the theoretical contribution, this study attempts to offer practical implications to subtitle translation practice and training. The translator, for example, will be able to improve his or her

translations when they are aware of the qualities of the “Third Code” (Xiao & Hu, 2015). In other words, translation quality of subtitles would be improved when subtitlers understood the features of translated feature films and animated feature films as well as CR translation strategies.

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

Firstly, in terms of researching the language features of translated subtitles, it is known that the corpus-based research method can be used to examine not only lexical features but also grammatical and syntactic features. However, one of the focuses of this study is the lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles. In other words, other linguistic aspects are not considered in this study. The first reason is the fact that analysis of grammatical and syntactical features is still regarded as an important academic research that requires specialized analytical tools (Xiao & Hu, 2015). A second reason is that lexical analysis, including lexical features and specific lexical items (forms of address, modal particles and vulgarism) may give researchers insights into the process of translating strategies of specific items or cultural references (Hu, 2016), while the analysis of grammatical and syntactical features may not contribute to cultural knowledge.

Secondly, the classification of cultural references in this study are based on Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020)’s classification of cultural references in subtitling, which includes Real-World Cultural References and Intertextual Cultural Allusions. Intertextual Cultural Allusions, however, are out of the scope of this study. The most important reason is that Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020) did not divide intertextual cultural allusions into subgroups, which would make them difficult to define in the context of subtitle translation. The second reason is that intertextual cultural allusions,

compared with real-word cultural references, are more difficult to recognize in subtitles, which would increase the difficulty of research.

Furthermore, the research is also constrained by the size of the corpus. Ten English feature films, seventeen Chinese feature films and fourteen English animated feature films and twenty Chinese animated feature films are selected as samples for the self-built comparable corpora. Three English feature and animated feature films are selected for parallel corpora. In this regard, a larger number of samples would enhance the credibility of the research. However, the collection of data has proven considerably more challenging than anticipated due to a limited number of films available with bilingual subtitles (English and Chinese). In particular, subtitles of Chinese films have to be collected by the researcher herself. For more comprehensive research in the future, a larger corpus may be required to investigate and draw more conclusions.

In addition, the subjective elements of this research cannot be avoided. For instance, even though the classification of cultural references in the selected films and the translation strategies of cultural references are based on Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020)'s taxonomy of cultural references in subtitling and Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2020)'s framework of cultural references in subtitling strategies, the judgement is mainly made by the researcher herself. The interpretation of cultural references or the translation strategies may vary between different researchers. However, the researcher tried to minimize the impact of subjective elements, such as employing rigorous methodologies and consulting with scholars who specialized in translation.

## **1.7 Definitions of Key Terms**

### **Animated Feature Films**

Animated films, as a genre, are far from being realistic and dramatic: they concentrate on comic and amusement, and they take advantage of the interplay between verbal and visual conventions, generally exaggerated for comedic effect (Minutella, 2020). Since the 1980s, feature-length computer-animated films have supplanted traditional animation as the most popular form of entertainment (Holliday, 2018).

### **Comparable Corpora**

Comparable corpora “consist of two separate collections of texts in the same language: one corpus consists of original texts in the language in question and the other consists of translations in that language from a given source language or languages” (Baker, 1995, p. 234). In the current study, there are two self-built comparable corpora. One is composed of Corpus of Chinese Feature Films (CCFF) and Corpus of English Feature Films (CEFF), which aims to examine translated subtitles of feature films. Another is composed of Corpus of Chinese Animated Feature Films (CCAFF) and Corpus of English Animated Feature Films (CEAFF), which aims to analyse translated subtitles of animated feature films.

### **Cultural References**

Cultural references (CRs) are “references to items that are tied up with a community’s culture, history or geography, and they can pose serious translation challenge” (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 221). CRs possess the same meaning with Realia (Vlahov & Florin, 1969), Culture Bumps (Leppihalme, 1997), Culture



Specific Item (Aixelá, 1996) and Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference (Pedersen, 2005). In this research, cultural references refer to cultural items in the translated Chinese subtitles.

### **Feature Films**

A feature film or feature-length film is a narrative film (motion picture or “movie”) with a running time long enough to be considered the principal or sole presentation in a commercial entertainment program. According to Simonton (2004), feature films usually represent the work of a wide range of professionals, including “directors, screenwriters, actors, cinematographers, film editors, composers, art directors, costume designers, and a host of specialists in makeup, special effects, and sound” (p.163).

### **Forms of Address**

Forms of address can be understood as “a device used to refer to the addressee(s) of an utterance” (Leech, 1999, p. 107). Forms of address plays a vital role in delineating social connections and they reflect cultural values to a greater extent than other aspects of language (Clyne et al., 2009; Meister, 2016). In the current study, forms of address is adopted as one of the specific items to examine lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles of feature films and animated feature films.

### **Lexical Features**

According to Hu (2016), the term lexical features refers to comprehensive characteristics of lexical use and features in the application of particular words and expressions in translated language. Hu (2016) pointed out that “The overall features

can be identified through investigating the type/token ratio, the lexical density, and high-frequency words” (p.106).

### **Modal Particles**

Modal particles often called sentence-final particles (Li & Thompson, 1989), the particles signal linguistic modality. In this study, Chinese modal particles, such as “啊 a /呀 a”, which means to reduce forcefulness, “吗 mā/ma”, which is used to raise questions, found in the translated subtitles are compare with those in the original Chinese subtitles so as to learn about the feature of translated subtitles.

### **Parallel Corpora**

Parallel corpora are collections of source texts in a given language and their target texts in another language that are aligned up to a certain degree (Hu, 2016). In the current research, parallel corpora are composed of English original subtitles and their translated Chinese subtitles of three feature films and three animated feature films.

### **Subtitling Strategies**

Translation strategy can be defined as “a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language into another” (Lörscher, 1991, p. 76). Subtitling strategies, in contrast to poetic translations, range from simple auxiliary subtitles to fully rhythmic and rhyming translations (Díaz-Cintas, 2020). The strategy for subtitling a film or television program is largely determined by the genre of film or program and its intended audience. Furthermore, the degree of similarity or

divergence between the source and target cultures may influence the strategies that to be employed (Altahri, 2013).

### **Vulgarism**

According to Stevenson (2010), vulgar means rude and likely to offend, especially because it is connected with sex or bodily functions. In the subtitles, vulgarism means a rude word or expression, especially one relating to sex. By investigating the translation of the vulgar words, it is possible to gain knowledge about related lexical features in translated and non-translated subtitles.

## **1.8 Organization of the Chapters**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one gives a general overview of the importance of subtitling and the status of the development of AVT in China. It also states the problems of the study. Following that, the objectives of the study and the research questions are provided, and the significance, as well as the limitation of the study are discussed.

The review of the related literature is presented in chapter two. This includes an overview of audiovisual translation, subtitling, translational lexical features, classification and translation strategies of culture references. Descriptive translation studies and translation norms are introduced as the two main theories of the current study. Subsequently, related studies in terms of lexical features of translation studies and cultural references in subtitles, theoretical and conceptual framework of the study are presented.

An overall research methodology is presented in chapter three. It also includes a description of the research design of the study and justifications for the

selection of the research design. An explanation of the selected English and Chinese feature films and animations is also described in chapter three. Further, justifications for the selected films are also given in the chapter. Methods and procedures of corpus collection, as well as methods and procedures of analysis of the corpus are also described in chapter three. Descriptions of the methods to answer the research questions are also detailed.

Chapter four presents the answers to research questions. Lexical features of translated Chinese subtitles are summarized from related parameters. Next, cultural references are identified and translating strategies are analysed. The summary and conclusions of the study are presented in chapter five. In this chapter, the findings of this study are discussed and the suggestion of translation strategies of English-Mandarin subtitling based on feature films and animated feature films is concluded.

## **1.9 Summary of Chapter One**

A general overview of the AVT and its status in China as the background to the study is presented in this chapter. Next, the problems with English-Mandarin subtitles are discussed. Then, the objectives of the study and the research questions are presented. Following the statement of the research questions, the significance of the study is explained. A clear definition of the limitations of the research and the definitions of key terms that guided the study are provided. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how the thesis is organized.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

A review of previous studies regarding the key concepts, theories, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this research is presented in this chapter. This chapter begins with a discussion of audiovisual translation and its types. Subtitling is then discussed in detail from the viewpoint of its nature, relevant studies, and a corpus-based approach. Following this, translational lexical features are introduced, including translational universals and translational lexical parameters. Next, the main concepts of this study, cultural reference, and translation strategies of CRs in subtitling are reviewed. Following that, related studies in terms of lexical features and subtitling CRs are presented. Finally, related theories and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study are presented and explained.

#### **2.2 Audiovisual Translation**

Audiovisual, according to Gambier (2003), refers to all broadcast programs like film, radio, television and video media. Audiovisual translation is a specialized translation that consists of two complementary channels, namely audio and visual, as well as a progression of signifying codes, such as language, motions, paralinguistics (Díaz-Cintas, 2020). Other terms frequently used today are ‘screen translation’ and ‘multimedia translation’. The two terms have slight differences, the former including all products presented via screens such as cinema screen, television screen or computer screen; the latter covers a wider range of products such as web pages, computer games and so on (Chiaro, 2009).

Researchers have attempted to classify the types of Audiovisual Translation. There have been considerable researches on the issue of various audiovisual productions translated into other languages in different types over the years (e.g., Chaume, 2013; Gambier, 2013; Pérez-González, 2014). According to Gambier (2013), there are two primary types of AVT: translation between codes and translation between languages. The first type pertains mainly to intralingual subtitling, which is intended primarily for language learning or for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. Apart from intralingual subtitling, which can be used on TV channels or DVD, translation between codes includes live subtitling, also called *respeaking*, which is mainly carried out for live transmissions like sporting events; and audio description, to make people get access to theatre performances, art exhibitions or films, particularly for those who suffer from visual problems.

Translation between languages involves script/scenario translation, which is required to get appropriations, awards and other monetary help for co-creation, or for looking for entertainers, professionals; and interlingual subtitling, includes transferring oral discourse in one or few languages to a couple of written lines; dubbing, the voice-track of the source language is supplanted by the voice-track of the target language; other forms belong to this category include free documentary; interpreting; voice-over and subtitling.

Different from Gambier's categories of types of AVT, Pérez-González (2014) divided AVT into three major headings: subtitling, revoice and assistive forms for special groups. The second category 'revoice' includes lip-synchronized dubbing, voice-over, narration, free commentary, and simultaneous interpreting. Narration is a pre-recorded or live form of oral exchange, providing a faithful summary of the original discourse. Assistive forms of AVT, incorporating *respeaking* and audio

description, are expected to provide access to social media programs for audio or visual sense impaired groups.

Chaume (2013) two types of AVT (see Table 2.1) have been discussed based on two aspects: one is revoicing, including dubbing, voice-overs, simultaneous interpretation of film, free commentary, fandubs and audio description. It is based on embedding and recording another soundtrack to synchronize the original sound. Another type is based on the written translated text embedded on the bottom of the screen where the original text is shown. This kind of type mainly comprises subtitling, subtitling, respeaking, and fansubbing. Díaz-Cintas (2020) argued that Chaume's typology perhaps is one of the most complete and recent.

Table 2.1 Summary of the Classification of Audiovisual Translation

Author	Classification of Audiovisual Translation		
Gambier (2013)	<b>Translation between codes</b>	<b>Translation between languages</b>	
	Intralingual subtitling Live subtitling Audio description	Script/scenario translation Interlingual subtitling Dubbing Free commentary Voice-over Subtitling	
Chaume (2013)	<b>Translation based on recording: Revoicing</b>	<b>Translation based on a written translated text: Captioning</b>	
	Dubbing Voice-overs Simultaneous interpretation of film Free commentary Fandubs Audio description	Subtitling Surtitling Respeaking Subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing Fansubbing	
Pérez-González (2014)	<b>Subtitling</b>	<b>Revoicing</b>	<b>Assistive forms of audiovisual translation</b>
		lip-synchronized dubbing voice-over narration free commentary simultaneous interpreting	Subtitling for the hard of hearing Respeaking Audio description