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摘要

电影是全球最具影响力的大众娱乐形式之一。自 20 世纪末以来，其跨国传播进入了快速发展阶段。尽管中国的影视行业起步较晚，但近年来发展迅速。优秀的作品纷纷走向海外，在国际市场上展现了中国文化的全新形象。与此同时，大量外国影片持续进入中国市场，成为中国观众了解世界文化的重要窗口。对于观看外语电影的中国观众来降，字幕是跨越语言障碍的主要方式。字幕翻译的质量不仅直接决定了观众的观影体验，更深刻影响着跨文化交流的实际效果。对于“字幕翻译的质量影响跨文化交流”这一问题，本文以动画电影《坏蛋联盟》为例，运用“目的论”中的三个核心原则，对影片中的代表性翻译案例进行了系统研究。研究发现，将这一理论应用于动画电影的翻译中，能够为译者提供一个合理的理论框架，弥补以往翻译方法的不足，并帮助译者实现交流的目的。本文基于对动画电影字幕翻译的分析，提出了合理的建议，这些建议在动画电影字幕的翻译中具有现实参考作用，同时也对全球推广中国动画电影具有积极意义。

关键词：字幕翻译；目的论；动画电影；《坏蛋联盟》

Abstract

Film is one of the most influential forms of mass entertainment in the world. Its cross-border spread entered a period of rapid development at the end of the 20th century. Although China's film and television industry started relatively late, **it has developed rapidly in recent years.** Excellent works have been going abroad, showing a new image of Chinese culture in the international market. At the same time, a large number of foreign films have continued to enter the Chinese market, becoming an important window for Chinese audiences to understand world cultures. For Chinese audiences watching foreign-language films, subtitles are the main medium to overcome language barriers. **The quality of subtitle translation not only directly determines the audience's viewing experience, but also deeply affects the actual effect of cross-cultural communication.** Regarding the issue that the quality of subtitle translation affects cross-cultural communication, this paper takes the animated film *The Bad Guys* as an example and uses the three core principles of the Skopos Theory of communication as analytical tools to conduct a systematic study of the representative translation cases in the film. It is found that the application of this theory in the translation of animated films can provide translators with a reasonable theoretical framework, make up for the shortcomings of the previous translation methods, **and help translators achieve the purpose of communication.** This paper is based on the analysis of the translation of subtitles in animated films, **and puts forward reasonable suggestions,** which can play a guiding role in the translation of subtitles in animated films, and also has a positive significance for the global promotion of Chinese animated films.

Key words: subtitle translation; Skopos Theory; animated films; *The Bad Guys*

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## Introduction

Animated films have unique styles and wide audiences. They set higher and more complex requirements for subtitle translation than live-action films. At present, most studies on subtitle translation focus on live-action films. There are few researches on animated comedy films full of slang, puns and cultural elements. How to balance accuracy, readability and cultural transmission in animated film subtitle translation has become an urgent practical problem to be solved.

This study selects the Chinese subtitle translation of the 2022 DreamWorks animated film The Bad Guys as the research object, using Hans Vermeer's Skopostheorie as the theoretical foundation. Combined with examples in the film, this paper explores the application of three core principles of Skopos Theory in subtitle translation and sums up practical translation strategies. It aims to offer practical references for subtitle translation of similar animated comedy films. The following chapter will explain the research background, corpus selection, research significance and overall structure of this paper in detail.

## Overview of the Study

This chapter systematically introduces the overall design of the study, focusing on the specific context of animated film subtitle translation, analyzing the rationality of corpus selection and the value of the research, **laying a solid foundation for the subsequent case analysis.**

### 1. 1 Research Background

In recent years, the development of China's animated film import market has become increasingly segmented. Hollywood animated films are no longer limited to musicals and fairy tales, but have begun to try new genres such as heist comedies, which have attracted a large number of adult audiences and become a new growth point in the market .

The most prominent difference between this type of animated film and traditional children's animated films is that their language is more colloquial and humorous, containing a large number of cultural references and wordplay (Jing, 2018). Therefore, subtitle translation needs to reach a higher level: translators not only need to make the dialogue accessible to young audiences, but also need to retain the humor and emotional color of the original text to attract adult audiences. In addition, the fast-paced plot requires strict control over the screen space and display time of subtitles (Yin, 2024).

At present, most studies on subtitle translation still focus on live-action films, and there is insufficient attention to the unique translation challenges of animated comedies. There is no consensus on the translation strategies for slang, wordplay and cultural elements in such films, which requires in-depth analysis through specific cases.

### 1. 2 Rationale for Corpus Selection

In the process of selecting the research corpus, the author focuses on three aspects to ensure the representativeness and research value of the study:

First, the language of the film has strong cultural characteristics. *The Bad Guys* is a typical heist comedy, with a large number of colloquial expressions, slang, idioms and wordplay in the dialogue, which brings great challenges to translation and is suitable for in-depth analysis of translation strategies.

Second, the film has been widely recognized by Chinese audiences. It achieved good box office results in China, and its official Chinese subtitles have been widely praised by audiences, which can reflect successful translation practices.

Third, the film has a wide audience range. It attracts audiences of all ages, so its subtitle translation needs to balance the cognitive levels of different groups, which is highly representative of commercial animated film translation.

### 1. 3 Significance of the Study

This study makes contributions at both theoretical and practical levels.

From the theoretical level, although Skopostheorie has been widely used in the field of audiovisual translation, it has not been systematically applied to the study of animated comedies.

This study takes *The Bad Guys* as an example to verify the applicability of Skopostheorie in this field, and enriches the theoretical research system of animated film subtitle translation (Zhang, 2025).

From the practical level, China's animation industry embraces new development opportunities. Imported animated films are increasingly common, and local animations are quickening their steps toward the world.. This study summarizes practical translation strategies through case analysis, which can provide guidance for subtitle translation practitioners and help improve the overall quality of animated film subtitle translation (Zhao, 2020).

#### 1. 4 Structure of the Thesis

**This paper consists of five parts.** The introduction presents research background and research questions, while the literature review introduces core concepts and three principles of Skopos Theory, analyzes the features and restrictions of subtitle translation and discusses the theory's applicability. As the core part, case analysis first illustrates the plot, linguistic features and subtitle translation purposes of *The Bad Guys*, analyzes typical examples from the perspective of the three principles to explore ways to balance accuracy, readability and cultural transmission, **and summarizes four main translation strategies.** The conclusion concludes major research results, points out research limitations and offers suggestions for future studies, and the final part covers references and acknowledgements.

#### Literature Review

**The literature review is divided into two parts,** one is the introduction of skopostheorie, **the other is the introduction of subtitle translation,** and the following focuses on the analysis of the two theories.

#### 2. 1 Overview of Skopostheorie

**Before the end of the last century,** the mainstream translation paradigm had not changed for a long time, and the source text paradigm was the most influential. This paradigm focuses on the correspondence between the source text and the target text, and the translation quality is measured by the correspondence between the source text and the target text, which can bring good results in literary translation, but its explanatory power is relatively weak in the process of applied translation. For the purpose of such practice, we should pay more attention to the effectiveness of communication with the audience than to the source text.

**In the development of this theory,** the functionalist translation theory has been recognized by more and more people, which has become the cornerstone of German translation research. Hans Vermeer systematically put forward this theory in the 1970s, and the two scholars jointly wrote the book "Groundwork for a General Theory of Translation" in 1984, which consolidated the theoretical foundation of this theory. The theory has caused a great change in the research paradigm of translation, and the focus of translation analysis has shifted from the source text to the target

text, and the purpose of translation is to achieve communication in the target language culture.

The translator aims to achieve cross-cultural communication through translation, **which is the core tenet of Skopos Theory**. The target text can determine the translator's strategic choice, which is enough to show that the purpose can justify the means. **The purpose of translation is to achieve the purpose**, which is the same as the purpose of the action. All translation activities should be carried out according to the purpose, which is different from the equivalence paradigm. The latter is too rigid and faithful to the source text, while Skopostheorie can meet the needs of the target audience and produce the corresponding target text (Nord, 2018).

This functionalist framework sets up a three-level rule system, **and the most important is the Skopos rule**, which requires that translators should make reasonable decisions in the process of translation, so as to meet the communication needs of the target text. **The second is the coherence rule**, which requires that the translated text should be understandable and that the target audience should be able to understand it in the process of understanding the cultural background. The last is the fidelity rule, which requires that the source text and the target text maintain consistency in the process of translation, and the degree of fidelity should be adjusted according to the purpose of the target text, not necessarily to pursue literal correspondence. Skopostheorie is willing to use audience-centered translation strategy, which can achieve the purpose of equivalence, **and can also make up for the shortcomings of traditional translation theory**, which can provide a reasonable analytical framework for the development of translation industry. This theory has a strong influence in the field of applied translation, especially in the fields of audio-visual translation, **advertising translation and technical translation**, which can not be described as the replication of the source text, but to convey the functional meaning of the source text to the target text.

## 2. 1. 1 Core Concepts of Skopostheorie

In the process of translation research in the 20th century, the source text paradigm has been in a dominant position for a long time, and the emergence of Skopos theory has changed this situation. [1] It is a theoretical framework created by German scholars in the 1970s, and it is also the theoretical basis of functionalism. This theory was refined and improved by the two scholars together. **"Skopos" comes from Greek and means "goal" or "purpose". This theory states that translation is not merely simple language conversion**, but a cross-cultural communication activity to realize communicative goals. The most basic principle of Skopos theory is that the translator should make strategic decisions according to the purpose of translation, which can be simply understood as "the end justifies the means".

**In the traditional equivalence theory**, the translator only needs to ensure that the source text and the target text are consistent in semantics and form, but the skopos theory requires the translator to analyze the target text in depth and grasp the cultural background, so that the



target text can play a communicative role. This paradigm shift has promoted the development of translation theory, no longer bound by language, but to the source text as a source of information, not the translation quality benchmark. In the process of translation, subtitle translators should put forward reasonable suggestions from the audience's point of view, understand the logical structure of subtitle language, and convey the information of the source text to the audience in an effective way. In this framework, translators can selectively process the source text content, and then reconstruct it according to the translation purpose, so that the target language audience can get a new information offer. This theory has a strong audience orientation and can play an important role in the process of audiovisual subtitle translation.

## 2. 1. 2 Three Rules of Skopostheorie

Skopos Theory consists of three core principles: the skopos principle, coherence principle and fidelity principle, which are in a clear hierarchical order. The skopos principle ranks first and serves as the highest guideline, holding that translation aims to achieve communicative goals and exert expected effects in the target language context. Translators can flexibly choose literal translation or free translation to meet translation purposes, and translation purposes can be divided into the translator's intention, target text function and strategic orientation.

The coherence principle, namely intratextual coherence, demands translated texts be readable and acceptable. Versions need to conform to target readers' language habits and cognitive ways to realize smooth communication in local cultural backgrounds.

The fidelity principle refers to intertextual coherence between source texts and target texts. Different from traditional rigid faithfulness, its faithful degree and form depend on translators' comprehension and translation aims, instead of sticking to word-for-word equivalence. In the whole translation process, the coherence principle is subject to the skopos principle, while the fidelity principle is subordinate to the coherence principle. Once the core translation purpose changes, the requirement of coherence can be adjusted accordingly.

## 2. 2 An Overview of Subtitle Translation

This section focuses on the application of Skopos Theory in subtitle translation and conducts an in-depth analysis of the definition, characteristics and constraints of subtitles. It also elaborates on the rationality of applying this theory to subtitle translation. Meanwhile, it builds a solid theoretical basis for subsequent example analysis.

### 2. 2. 1 Definition and Features of Subtitle Translation

Subtitle translation refers to converting the language of film and television works into text in another language and displaying it on the screen in real time. Its core essence lies in presenting the linguistic content of the original work through text, enabling the audience to understand the film content while listening to the original soundtrack.

Subtitle translation has distinct characteristics that set it apart from other forms of translation. The most prominent feature is its strict time limitation: subtitles usually remain on the screen for only 2-7 seconds, and the audience cannot repeatedly read them, so the content must be concise enough for quick comprehension. Second, it requires colloquial expression. Since film and television works are closely related to the daily life of the audience, colloquial language helps the audience resonate with the characters and plot. Third, it emphasizes comprehensiveness. Subtitle translation needs to coordinate with sound and images to convey information to the audience in a complete and coherent way. Fourth, it should take audience accessibility into account. As animated films mainly target children and adolescents, their subtitles must be easy to understand and conform to the cognitive level of this group.

## 2. 2. 2 Key Constraints of Subtitle Translation

In the process of translating subtitles, we need to be aware of the existence of two constraints: text and technology.

The most important technical constraints are time and space constraints. The screen space is limited, which is the so-called space constraint. Generally, subtitles are required to be no more than two lines, and the number of characters in each line should not exceed 18. Time constraints require that subtitles can be retained for a certain period of time, which requires that the time should be consistent with the dialogue rhythm and give audiences enough time to read. Translators should convey information to audiences in the most concise way, and usually take reduction measures in translation.

In the process of creating subtitles, we should not only consider the relationship between subtitles and other semiotic elements, but also take into account the relationship between subtitles and music, sound, performance and so on. When writing subtitles, we should not only convey the dialogue content, but also coordinate with non-verbal elements to make the narrative more complete. Cultural differences are also an important factor. Some expressions, jokes and cultural references in the source language are difficult to find corresponding expressions in the target language, which requires translators to make adaptive choices.

## 2. 2. 3 Applicability of Skopos Theory to Subtitle Translation

Skopostheorie demonstrates strong applicability in subtitle translation research for several reasons.

First of all, it should be recognized that subtitle translation is inevitably related to the purpose. The fundamental purpose of subtitle translation is to help the audience understand the content of foreign films and have a deeper understanding of them, which is a typical communication purpose. This conforms to the core principles of Skopos Theory, which stresses that translation purposes dominate the whole translation process.

Second, the theory of purpose can play a guiding role in the process of solving constraints. Subtitles have certain time and space constraints, requiring translators to condense and adapt content, and even omit some content. The purpose-oriented approach can justify such adaptations. As long as the translation can achieve the desired communication purpose, the form can be adjusted.

Thirdly, the three principles can play an important role in the evaluation of subtitle translation, which requires scholars to analyze whether the translated content can meet the needs of the target audience, whether the language is smooth and natural in the target language, and whether it is consistent with the source text. Through the construction of the multi-dimensional framework, the translation quality can be analyzed comprehensively.

In the previous research, the theory of Skopos has been successfully introduced into the analysis of film subtitles, focusing on the analysis of Zootopia, Forrest Gump, Hi, Mom and so on, which can play an important role in this field.

#### Case Analysis of Subtitle Translation in The Bad Guys

When analyzing the subtitles, we need to use the case analysis method, and in this paper, the case analysis method is used to analyze the subtitles.

##### 3. 1 Film Abstract and Translation Rationale

In the process of analyzing the subtitles of The Bad Guys, we should have a deep understanding of the language characteristics and plot of the film, and analyze what kind of translation purpose can be achieved in the process of translation. In the translation process, we need to deeply understand the narrative content and style of the source text, and use Skopostheorie to analyze how to address the constraints of audio-visual translation. Meanwhile, **we should clarify the purpose of the target text**, evaluate the rationality of the translation strategy, and further ensure effective communication with the target audience. This section first introduces the language characteristics and plot of the film, and then analyzes the purpose of translation and specific objectives.

##### 3. 1. 1 Plot and Linguistic Features of The Bad Guys

The Bad Guys is a computer-animated comedy film released in 2022 by DreamWorks Animation, adapted from a series of children's picture books. The story revolves around five animals, including Mr. Wolf, a smooth-talking pickpocket; Mr. Snake, a cynical safe cracker; Mr. Piranha, a strongman with a bad temper; Mr. Shark, a master of disguise; and Ms. Tarantula, a hacker expert. The five of them have been on the run for many years, and finally encountered their biggest enemy, Governor Foxington, and were arrested. In order to avoid imprisonment, they decided to reform under the guidance of Professor Marmalade, a guinea pig with a kind heart, believing that everyone can change.

In the process of self-redemption, they deeply feel that change is possible, and the film explores a variety of themes, including friendship, identity, good and evil, etc. (Wang et al., 2025).

In the process of translating the film into subtitles, we should pay attention to the uniqueness of language, and the translation of subtitles will be faced with challenges. In the process of writing, the speech style of the characters should be fully considered, and the characters' personalities and backgrounds should be reflected. The charm of Wolf's language is obvious, and he can persuade others with his words. The tone of the snake is sarcastic, and his words are humorous. Piranha's language is simple, with many exclamations, and his language is impulsive. Although the shark looks terrible, his words are gentle. The spider's dialogue is full of youth slang and technical terms, and the translation should reflect the uniqueness of each character's language.

This film is full of humorous expressions and clever wordplay, which calls for creative adjustments in translation. Plenty of its jokes originate from English linguistic features such as homophones that have no proper Chinese equivalents. Hence translators need to flexibly revise expressions to amuse the target audience.

In this dialogue, colloquialism and orality are fully reflected, and the language is more in line with the characteristics of daily conversation. In the dialogue, incomplete sentences, interjections, contractions and so on are used to make the rhythm of the film more natural and the comedy timing more accurate. In the process of translation, we should make the language colloquial, and also ensure that the subtitles are concise enough to meet the needs of space and time.

In addition, the line setting is consistent with the visual gags and actions in the plot. In the process of creating a humorous effect, the interaction between verbal and non-verbal elements is more prominent, which requires the translator to coordinate the subtitles with the visual cues, so as not to affect the audience's viewing experience.

### 3. 1. 2 The Skopos of Subtitle Translation in the Film

In the process of translating this film, we should pay attention to the language characteristics and comedy genre, and the most fundamental purpose is to enable Chinese audiences to have the same experience as English audiences in watching this film. There are many specific objectives in this process, which will have a guiding role in the translator's formulation of translation strategies.

The most critical goal is to convey humor. The film is a comedy that can attract audiences of all ages. In order to achieve artistic integrity and commercial success, the original dialogue should be humorous. When the English language is used in the joke, the translator should find the equivalent of the joke, so that the audience can have a good viewing experience and will not be confused.

In the process of rapid dialogue and rapid action, the audience must be able to understand the content of the film immediately, and the subtitles exist for a short time, only two to seven seconds, and the audience can not stop or re-read them in the process of watching, so it is necessary to simplify the long explanation and complex sentence structure, so that the audience can

quickly understand the content of the film, and the story is coherent.

In the process of writing, we should pay attention to the uniqueness of each role, choose appropriate words, and pay attention to tone. The uniqueness of each role is reflected in his way of speaking, which is conducive to the development of the film and television works. Translators should protect the uniqueness of each role and deepen the understanding of the relationship between roles and characters so that audiences can feel the emotional changes of the characters.

In the process of cultural transmission, we should pay attention to the accessibility of cultural products, grasp the degree of domestication, and make reasonable decisions in the process of introducing source culture. In the process of film creation, we should introduce American culture into the film to enhance the attractiveness of the film and enhance the authenticity of the film, but if the degree of foreignness is too high, it will not be recognized by young audiences, and the enthusiasm of the audience will be reduced. Therefore, translators should have a correct understanding of the importance of cultural references in the narrative, and eliminate barriers in the process of understanding.

The four goals are arranged in a hierarchical order, which is based on the skopos theory, and can play a guiding role in the next stage of translation.

### 3. 2 Translation Analysis from the Perspective of the Three Rules

Building on the theoretical framework established in the previous literature review, in the next stage of research, we will systematically analyze representative translation examples extracted from the official Chinese subtitles of The Bad Guys. We will select five categories of typical cases, including colloquial daily dialogues, culture-loaded idioms, pun-based humorous expressions, character iconic lines and key plot turning sentences, to explore how the three core rules of Skopos Theory, namely skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule, are concretely reflected and flexibly applied in the subtitle translation process. By comparing the linguistic form, semantic connotation and pragmatic effect of the original text and the translated text, we will deeply analyze the translator's decision-making logic when facing the time and space constraints of subtitles, cross-cultural differences and audience cognitive gaps, laying a solid empirical foundation for summarizing targeted translation strategies later (Shen, 2025).

#### 3. 2. 1 Analysis under the Skopos Rule

The principle of purpose states that all translation activities are guided by the intended purpose of the target text.

Example 1:

Original: "We're not bad guys. We're just... misunderstood."

Translation: "我们不是坏蛋。我们只是……被误解了。"

The core purpose of this translation is to convey the emotional changes of the characters and to facilitate the audience's understanding of the "redemption" theme. This line of dialogue is a

concentrated expression of the inner conflict of the big bad wolf, expressing his complex emotions of longing for recognition. **The translator retained the ellipsis in the original text**, accurately reproducing the hesitant and doubtful tone and self-doubting mental state of the character. Translating “misunderstood” as “被误解了” not only retains the core meaning but also avoids adding redundant explanations, ensuring that the audience can quickly grasp the emotional core of the character within the limited display time of the subtitles. This translation fully achieves the communicative purpose of revealing the inner world of the character.

Example 2:

Original: “Let’ s do this thing!”

Translation: “搞事情!”

This is the motivational slogan before the team carried out the mission, full of a strong sense of rebellion and excitement. **If translated literally as “让我们做这件事!”**, it would be too plain and fail to convey the tone and emotional color of the original text. The translator adopted the popular internet phrase “搞事情!” widely used by young Chinese audiences, perfectly capturing the playful and rebellious spirit of the original text. This translation not only meets the requirement of concise subtitles but also enhances the entertainment value of the film, and is highly consistent with the translation goal of “enabling viewers to have a pleasant viewing experience” (Zhang et al., 2024).

Example 3:

Original: “I’ ve got a gut feeling this is a bad idea. ”

Translation: “我的直觉告诉我这主意不靠谱。”

“Gut feeling” is an English idiom, referring to an instinctive perception based on intuition rather than rational analysis. There is no exact equivalent expression in Chinese. **If translated literally word for word**, it would become awkward and hard to comprehend. The translator rewrites it as “我的直觉告诉我”, **which accurately delivers the core meaning of the original sentence.**.. At the same time, “bad idea” has been translated as the more colloquial “不靠谱”, which better suits the daily language habits of Chinese viewers. This translation accurately conveys the original information while ensuring the readability of the subtitles and achieving the communicative purpose of the text (An et al., 2025).

### 3. 2. 2 Analysis under the Coherence Rule

**The coherence principle requires that the translation be coherent and understandable within the target language’ s cultural context.** It ensures that viewers can follow the plot smoothly without any confusion.

Example 4:

Original: “Piece of cake!”

Translation: “小菜一碟!”

This is a common idiom in English to describe something as extremely easy. Coincidentally, in Chinese, there is exactly a phrase with the same meaning and metaphorical structure as this one: “小菜一碟!” The translator directly used this equivalent expression, so that all Chinese viewers could easily understand. This translation not only accurately conveys the meaning of the original text but also maintains a natural and fluent style, perfectly meeting the requirements of coherence.

Example 5:

Original: “You’ re barking up the wrong tree. ”

Translation: “你找错对象了。”

This English idiom literally means “对着错误的树吠叫”, metaphorically referring to criticizing or pursuing the wrong person. If translated literally, Chinese viewers would not be able to understand its figurative meaning. The translator abandoned the metaphorical form of the original text and directly translated it as “你找错对象了”, which clearly and concisely conveys the core meaning of the original text. Although the metaphor is lost, it ensures that the audience can quickly understand the lines within the limited subtitle display time, which is more important for the coherence of the film narrative.

Example 6:

Original: “What’ s the catch?”

Translation: “有什么条件?”

This is an oral expression used to inquire about the hidden flaws or conditions behind something that seems too good to be true. There is no exact corresponding expression in Chinese. The translator renders it as “What are your terms?”, which fully conveys the hidden meaning of the original sentence. This translation is concise and colloquial. It helps audiences quickly grasp the character’ s skeptical tone and keeps the dialogue smooth and coherent.

### 3. 2. 3 Analysis under the Fidelity Rule

The fidelity principle requires coherence between the source text and the target text. However, the degree of faithfulness is subject to the skopos principle and coherence principle.

Example 7:

Original: “We are the Bad Guys. It’ s what we do. ”

Translation: “我们是坏蛋联盟。这就是我们的本色。”

In this sentence, “the Bad Guys” is both the team name and the movie title. The translator translated it as “坏蛋联盟”, which retains the core meaning of “坏蛋” and adds the word “联盟” to emphasize the team identity, which is more in line with the naming convention of Chinese movies. “It’ s what we do” is translated as “这就是我们的本色”, accurately conveying the meaning that this is their inherent nature and way of life. This translation achieves functional fidelity to the original text, accurately conveying the team’ s self-identity and the theme of the movie.

Example 8:

Original: “I’ m having a moment here!”

Translation: “我正煽情呢!”

This is an informal expression used in situations where someone is experiencing a strong emotional moment and does not want to be disturbed. If translated literally as “我正在这里有一个时刻!”, it would be completely incomprehensible. The translator translated it as “我正煽情呢!”. This colloquial expression accurately captures the emotional state of the character, who is feeling sentimental and unwilling to be disturbed. Although the lexical meanings are different, the functional meaning is completely the same. This is a typical example of functional fidelity, prioritizing the transmission of emotional information over word-for-word correspondence.

Example 9:

Original: “Snake, you’ re being dramatic. ”

Translation: “蛇, 你戏太多了。”

“Being dramatic” means behaving in an exaggerated manner and having excessive emotions. The translator used the popular online slang “too much drama” to vividly describe the state of someone overreacting and making a big deal out of a small issue. This translation not only accurately conveys the meaning of the original text but also fits the humorous tone of the film, reflecting the character’ s teasing tone towards the snake, making the dialogue more lively and interesting. This translation achieves faithful communication at the pragmatic level, ensuring that viewers can perceive the same emotional tone and interpersonal relationship as the original language speakers.

### 3. 3 Balancing Accuracy, Readability and Cultural Transmission

From the above case analysis, we can find that the core difficulty of animated film subtitle translation is to reach three goals at the same time. It needs to convey original information accurately, adapt to target language expressions and subtitle time-space limits, and realize effective cross-cultural communication. These three elements are not mutually disconnected; rather, they form a dynamic balance relationship within the framework of Skopos Theory: when conflicts arise among the three, the highest translation purpose of “ensuring that the audience has a smooth and enjoyable viewing experience” should be used as the criterion for prioritization (Zhu, 2021).

#### 3. 3. 1 Balancing Accuracy and Readability

Accuracy is the foundation of translation, but subtitle translation aims for functional accuracy rather than literal correspondence. At the same time, it must ensure readability within the constraints of time and space.

Example 10:

Original: “I’ ve been pulling heists since I was a pup. I’ m the best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be.”

Translation: “我从小就干这行, 过去是、现在是、将来也永远是最厉害的神偷。”



In this line of dialogue, the big bad wolf boasts about his career of theft, using three “best” to form an antithetical structure to emphasize confidence. If translated literally as “我从小就开始抢劫，我是现在最好的、过去最好的、将来也会是最好的，” the Chinese expression would be cumbersome and stiff. The translator condensed “pulling heists” into “干这行”，which has a clear meaning in the context; transformed the three “best” into a more natural antithetical structure in Chinese “过去是、现在是、将来也永远是”；added the word “神偷” to clearly define the profession and add a sense of pride consistent with the character’s tone. This translation accurately conveys the character’s personality while ensuring the fluency of the subtitle, achieving a balance between accuracy and readability.

### 3. 3. 2 Readability and Cultural Transmission

Cultural elements are an important part of film translation, but they must be based on ensuring the readability for the target audience.

Example 11:

Original: “You’re a regular Robin Hood, stealing from the rich and giving to… well, yourselves.”

Translation: “你可真是当代罗宾汉啊，劫富济…… 哦不对，是劫富济己。”

“Robin Hood” is a well-known cultural figure in the West, and his image of “robbing the rich to help the poor” has been widely spread in China. The translator retained the cultural symbol “Robin Hood” and used the familiar Chinese idiom “rob the rich to help the poor” for the audience. Through the turn of “哦不对，是劫富济己” the original ironic tone was ingeniously restored. This translation not only enables the audience to understand the humorous effect of the lines, but also retains the Western cultural elements, achieving a balance between readability and cultural dissemination. If “Robin Hood” is translated as “劫富济贫的好汉”，the cultural connotation and the cleverness of the irony will be lost.

### 3. 3. 3 Balancing Accuracy and Cultural Transmission

For cultural elements closely related to the plot and characters, the translator needs to strike a balance between accurate transmission and cultural adaptation.

Example 12:

Original: “That’s the Marmalade Method. Kindness is the only superpower that matters.”

Translation: “这就是橘子酱法则。善良才是唯一真正的超能力。”

“Marmalade” is the name of the Professor of Orange Sauce and also the name of the philosophical concept he advocates. If it were transliterated as “马默雷德法则”，Chinese viewers would not be able to understand the connection between this name and the gentle and sweet image of the character. The translator adopted a method of transliteration combined with interpretation, translating “Marmalade” as “橘子酱”，which not only retained the original name but also conveyed the sweet and warm imagery associated with orange sauce. This translation accurately

conveys the core information of the original text, effectively transmits the cultural connotation of the character's name, and achieves a balance between accuracy and cultural dissemination.

### 3. 4 Summary of Translation Strategies from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Through systematic analysis of the subtitles of *The Bad Guys*, guided by the three core principles of Skopos Theory, the translator mainly adopts the following four key translation strategies. These strategies are not used in isolation but are flexibly combined according to specific contexts and translation purposes, all serving the highest goal of “enabling Chinese audiences to obtain the same viewing experience as English audiences” (Alhashmi, 2022).

#### 3. 4. 1 Reduction Strategy

The reduction strategy is the primary strategy to address the time and space constraints of subtitles. It refers to compressing the length of the translation through condensation, deletion, and simplification without losing core semantics and emotions, so that it meets the technical requirements of “no more than 18 characters per line and a display time of 2-7 seconds”. This strategy directly embodies the core idea of Skopos Theory that “the end justifies the means”. When form conflicts with content, priority is given to ensuring the effective transmission of information (Chen, 2013).

Example 13:

Original: “Okay, listen up, team. We’ve got exactly 10 minutes to get in, grab the Golden Dolphin, and get out before the security system resets. No mistakes, no detours, no heroics. Got it?”

**Translation:** “听着，各位。我们只有10分钟，进去拿金海豚奖杯，安保重置前撤离。不许出错、不许绕路、不许逞英雄。明白吗？”

The original text is a long imperative sentence before the mission, containing multiple repetitive imperative structures and modifying components. The translator first deletes the non-core adverb “exactly” to avoid semantic redundancy; condenses “get in, grab the Golden Dolphin, and get out” into “进去拿金海豚奖杯，撤离”，omitting repeated verbs; simplifies “before the security system resets” to “安保重置前”，using industry abbreviations instead of complete expressions. At the same time, the parallel structure of “不许出错、不许绕路、不许逞英雄” is completely retained, accurately conveying the seriousness and urgency of the mission. Through reduction, the length of the translation is reduced by about 30%, which fully meets the time and space constraints of subtitles. At the same time, no core information is lost, ensuring that the audience can accurately grasp the content of the instruction in the quickly flashing subtitles.

#### 3. 4. 2 Combination of Domestication and Foreignization Strategies

The domestication strategy is oriented towards the target language culture, adopting expression forms familiar to the audience to lower the threshold of understanding; the foreignization strategy aims at source language culture and retains original cultural characteristics and writing styles.

In animated film translation, a combined strategy of “domestication first and foreignization second” is usually adopted, which not only ensures the fluency of viewing but also achieves the purpose of cross-cultural communication (Kuang, 2015).

Example 14:

Original: “He’s a loose cannon. We can’t trust him with this mission.”

Translation: “他就是个定时炸弹，这个任务不能交给他。”

“Loose cannon” is a unique English slang, originating from the phenomenon that “unfixed cannons would roll around on ships and cause danger” in the age of sail, metaphorically referring to “people who are out of control and unpredictable”. If translated literally into “他是一门松动的大炮”，Chinese audiences would not understand its metaphorical meaning. The translator adopts the domestication strategy and replaces it with “定时炸弹”. This phrase has the same metaphorical effect in Chinese. It clearly expresses the meaning of being dangerous and hard to control, conforms to daily oral Chinese, and enables audiences to immediately know the character’s worries.

Example 15:

Original: “This is like Mission: Impossible, but with more fur.”

Translation: “这简直就是《碟中谍》，只不过多了点毛。”

“Mission: Impossible” is a world-famous Hollywood film series, and its official Chinese translation “《碟中谍》” has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. The translator adopts the foreignization strategy, directly retaining this cultural symbol, and at the same time, through the supplementary explanation of “只不过多了点毛”，highlights the animal character characteristics of the animated film. This translation not only allows the audience to quickly understand the humorous effect of the lines (comparing the animal theft team to a special agent team) but also retains the cultural reference of the original text, realizing the unity of entertainment and cultural communication.

### 3. 4. 3 Equivalent Effect Strategy

The equivalent effect strategy emphasizes that translation should pursue the equivalence of pragmatic effects rather than the equivalence of linguistic forms. For humorous expressions, emotional expressions, and personalized character language in animated films, if literal translation cannot achieve the same effect, the translator should flexibly adjust the expression method so that the target audience can obtain the same feeling as the source language audience (Xu, 2017).

Example 16:

Original: “Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the other side... and steal your wallet!”

Translation: “为什么鸡要过马路？为了到对面去……顺便偷你的钱包！”

This is a typical English cold joke. Its humor lies in first saying the well-known standard answer and then creating an unexpected effect through reversal. Although the joke of “the chicken crossing the road” is not as popular in Chinese as in English, the structural logic of the joke is cross-cultural universal. The translator adopts the equivalent effect strategy and completely retains the sentence structure and punchline design of the original text. Through the context (the character is telling a joke) and visual performance (the character’s proud expression), the audience can easily understand the humor point and obtain the same comedy experience as the English audience (Zhan et al., 2025).

#### 3. 4. 4 Implicit Cultural Compensation Strategy

The implicit cultural compensation strategy refers to naturally integrating the source language cultural information into the translation through replacement, supplementation, and paraphrasing without adding additional annotations, so as to make up for the cultural knowledge gap of the target audience. This strategy avoids the interference of explicit annotations on the fluency of viewing and meets the immediacy requirements of subtitle translation.

Example 17:

Original: “He’s the king of the underworld. The Don. The Godfather.”

Translation: “他是地下世界的王者，是老大，是教父。”

Both “Don” and “Godfather” are core terms in Western Mafia culture. Among them, “Godfather” has been widely recognized by Chinese audiences due to the film of the same name, but “Don”, as an exclusive title for Mafia leaders, may be unfamiliar to some audiences. The translator adopts the implicit cultural compensation strategy, translating “Don” into “老大”, a general term for gang leaders in Chinese, while retaining the cultural symbol of “教父”. This not only ensures that audiences unfamiliar with Mafia culture can understand the meaning of the lines but also retains the cultural characteristics and tone intensity of the original text, realizing the effective transmission of cultural information without interfering with the fluency of viewing.

#### Conclusion

This paper takes *The Bad Guys* as the research object, focuses on the translation of Chinese subtitles, and puts forward reasonable suggestions from the theoretical level of Skopos theory.

This study makes it clear that the purpose theory can provide a reliable theoretical basis for the analysis of subtitles and has a strong practicability. This theory features obvious purposiveness, matching the goal of subtitle translation: enabling audiences to comprehend movie content and have a pleasant viewing experience. The three rules can be used to evaluate translation quality, helping researchers judge if the translation meets the communication goal, is easy to understand, and consistent with the original text.

In this paper, the translation of *The Bad Guys* is taken as the research object, and four translation strategies are put forward on the basis of Skopostheorie, namely, the strategy of

reducing the time and space constraints, the strategy of foreignization and domestication, the strategy of preserving emotion and humor, and the strategy of cultural compensation, which can make up for the audience's understanding gap. With the help of these strategies, translators can have a good grasp of the context and purpose, and provide Chinese audiences with a good viewing experience.

The research also points out that translators should coordinate the relationship between cultural transmission, readability and accuracy, and conform to the hierarchical relationship of the three rules, with the purpose rule as the core. When there is a conflict between the source text and the target text, translators should pursue accessibility and entertainment, and the purpose of this arrangement is to attract a wider audience and bring them a good entertainment experience.

In this study, the shortcomings are also analyzed. The research only focuses on some typical cases and does not cover all the contents of the film translation. Because it is difficult to grasp the translator's decision-making process, the analysis of the translation strategy is only hypothetical. In the next stage of research, the data set should be expanded to a certain extent, and the audience's acceptance should be analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of translation.

Generally speaking, the translation of Chinese subtitles in this film fully reflects the value of Skopostheorie in audiovisual translation. As cross-cultural communication grows closer, translation practice is backed by sounder theories. This theory helps translators make proper choices in translation and plays a vital part in promoting cross-cultural exchanges

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<sup>1</sup> Nord C. Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained[M].

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- 1.复写率：指相似或疑似重复内容在全文中的比重。
- 2.自引率：指引用本人发表内容占全文的比重，需正确标注引用。
- 3.他引率：指引用他人内容占全文的比重，需正确标注引用。
- 4.专业术语率：指公式定理、法律条文、行业用语等在全文中的比重。
- 5.去除本人引用相似率：指去除本人发表部分后，相似或引用内容占全文的比重，需正确标注引用。
- 6.去除专业术语相似率：指去除专业术语后，相似或引用内容占全文的比重。
- 7.自写率：指原创内容在全文中的比重。
- 8.典型相似文章：指相似或引用内容占全文总相似比超过30%的文章。

相似片段中“综合”包括：《中文主要报纸全文数据库》《中国专利特色数据库》《中国主要会议论文特色数据库》《港澳台文献资源》《图书资源》《维普优先出版论文全文数据库》《年鉴资源》《古籍文献资源》《IPUB原创作品》

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