A Study on Subtitle Translation Strategies in the Overseas Trailer of *Ne Zha 2*

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Abstract: *This study focuses on the overseas trailer of the popular animated movie "Ne Zha 2" and analyzes its Chinese subtitle translation strategy. This movie contains a large amount of traditional Chinese cultural elements, which poses two main challenges when translated into English: how to accurately convey vocabulary with Chinese cultural characteristics, and how to make foreign audiences understand and willing to accept it. The study utilized two translation theories, "domestication" and "foreignization", to analyze the translation of terms related to natural environment, language habits, religious beliefs, and social culture in trailers, with a particular focus on the translation of a limerick. Research has found that "Ne Zha 2" does not only use a fixed translation method in its overseas trailer, but flexibly combines "preserving Chinese characteristics" and "being close to foreign audiences' understanding" based on specific content and cultural background. This flexible and practical translation method has effectively helped Chinese culture go global, and also provided a good reference and inspiration for how Chinese films can do well in subtitle translation in the international market.*

Keywords: Subtitle translation; *Ne Zha 2;* Translation strategy; Culture-loaded terms

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the animated film industry, director Jiao Zi's carefully crafted new film "*Ne Zha 2*" was officially released in China on January 29, 2025. This movie was very popular as soon as it was released, with a box office of 1.18 billion yuan on the first day, breaking the global record for the opening box office of animated films. In just three days, the box office exceeded 5 billion yuan.

After achieving great success domestically, *Ne Zha 2* began to enter the international market. In February 2025, an overseas version trailer with a duration of 1 minute and 34 seconds was officially released. On February 14th, the movie was fully released in major cinemas in North America. According to Mao Yan's statistics, as of 11:13 am on May 26, 2025, the total box office of this movie has reached 15.867 billion yuan, of which overseas markets have contributed 394 million yuan.

The overseas trailer of this film uses bilingual Chinese and English subtitles instead of English dubbing. Although the trailer is only a few minutes long, it condenses the most exciting parts of the entire movie, allowing the audience to experience the charm of the movie in advance. In movie promotion, trailers play a crucial role: they can attract audiences into the cinema, create buzz, and promote box office growth (Yang, 2022). In other words, trailers are actually a type of advertisement. In order to make foreign audiences understand and interested, subtitle translation in the trailer is very important.

Subtitle translation is different from ordinary text translation. It requires consideration of whether the audience can understand, whether the information is complete, whether the expression is concise and clear, and usually does not have annotations to help understand, making it more difficult (Huang, 2002). In addition, "*Ne Zha 2*" is adapted from a traditional Chinese mythological story, which contains many unique elements of Chinese culture. Accurately translating these elements into English is a great challenge.

The two commonly used strategies in translation when facing cultural differences are "domestication" and "foreignization". If used properly, these two methods can faithfully convey the original meaning and make it easier for foreign audiences to understand and resonate with it (Zhang& Zhao, 2012). This study focuses on the overseas trailer of "*Ne zha 2*", analyzing the translation methods of words, idioms, and poems with Chinese cultural characteristics, and exploring the translation strategies and techniques used in it.

2. Translation Strategies and Methods

Translation activities involve two main participants: the original author and the target audience. Based on the translator's orientation toward these two ends, translation strategies can be classified into two types: domestication and foreignization (Xiong, 2014). The theoretical foundation for domestication and foreignization can be traced back to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813). As early as 1813, he proposed two fundamentally different approaches to translation: one that does not disturb the reader and allows the author to accommodate the reader—this is the domestication strategy, which centers on the target language audience; the other that does not disturb the author and instead requires the reader to accommodate the author—this is the foreignization strategy, which centers on the source text.

In practice, any translated work is a hybrid result of both foreignization and domestication strategies. There is no such thing as a translation that is 100% foreignized or 100% domesticated. Generally speaking, translation techniques inclined toward foreignization include imitation, borrowing, and literal translation. Techniques inclined toward domestication include established equivalent translation, abstraction, amplification, semantic translation, cross-cultural adaptation, creative translation, substitution, and rewriting (Dong, 2021).

3. English Translation of Culture-Loaded Terms

Cultural loaded words refer to words, phrases, or customary

expressions that carry the cultural characteristics and unique meanings of a certain ethnic group. They reflect the way of life formed by a nation over a long period of historical development, which is different from other cultures (Liao, 2000: 232). For example, in Chinese, there are many words that only have special meanings in Chinese culture, which is also one of the differences between Chinese and other languages.

Translation expert Nida (1993: 91) classified these culturally distinctive words into five types: those related to the natural environment, those related to language structure, those related to material culture, those related to religious beliefs, and those related to social customs.

The movie '*Nezha 2*' is adapted from a traditional Chinese mythological story and contains many cultural elements of this kind. Therefore, when translating this movie into English and targeting a global audience, the translator must be particularly careful in handling these words with special cultural meanings, both to make them understandable and to preserve the flavor of traditional Chinese culture (Zheng, 2016). Only in this way can the world better understand Chinese culture and help Chinese films go global. Ecological culture-loaded terms reflect the geographical environment and ecological conditions essential for the survival and development of people in a given cultural context. In the overseas trailer of *Ne Zha 2*, examples include geographic terms like "陈塘关" and "龙宫." Linguistic culture-loaded terms include classifiers, dialects, idioms, and four-character expressions (Wang& Fugui, 2018). Several four-character idioms appear in the trailer, such as "报仇雪恨" (vengeance) and "千载难逢" (a once-in-a-millennium opportunity). Socio-cultural terms include forms of address, customs, entertainment, and political events. In the trailer, examples include terms like "哪吒" and "三太子".

The culture-loaded terms that appear in the overseas trailer of *Ne Zha 2* are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Culture-loaded terms and their classification

	Source Text	Translation
Ecological Culture	陈塘关	Chentang
	龙宫	Dragon Palace
Religious Culture	妖孽	wicked fiends
Linguistic Culture	一身正气	He's all about righteousness
	滔天罪行	unforgivable sins
	报仇雪恨	vengeance
	千载良机	once-in-a-millennium chance
	鸡犬不留	Not a soul shall remain
Socio-cultural	哪吒	Nezha
	三太子	the Third Prince

In the overseas trailer of *Ne Zha 2*, ecological culture-loaded terms appear twice, religious ones once, linguistic terms five times, and socio-cultural terms twice. The subtitle translation strategies applied to these terms generally fall into two categories: foreignization and domestication. A detailed analysis is as follows:

3.1 Foreignization of Culture-Loaded Terms

1) Transliteration

Cultural terms and their imagery in one language may have no equivalent in another, and at times, their meanings cannot be accurately conveyed with just a word or two. In such cases, the translator may convert the source language's pronunciation into a similar or identical form in the target language—this method is known as transliteration.

Example 1:

In the trailer released overseas, the movie title "Nezha II: The Demonic Children Roar in the Sea" was translated as simply "*Ne Zha 2*". When translating the word 'Nezha', transliteration was used, but some complex parts of the Chinese original name were omitted to make the English title look simpler and easier to understand.

Although Nezha is a well-known character in China, many foreign audiences may not have heard of him before. So for them, directly transliterating 'Nezha' is as unfamiliar and difficult to understand as seeing Chinese characters.

Example 2:

"陈塘关" is transliterated as "Chentang." The name comes from The Investiture of the Gods, a Ming Dynasty classic, and refers to a key location associated with the mythological figure Ne zha. Since there is no English equivalent for the place name, transliteration preserves its original cultural imagery.

2) Literal Translation

Literal translation avoids figurative interpretations of lexical meanings and rhetorical elements. It allows for appropriate grammatical adjustments so that the translation conforms to the lexical-syntactic norms of the target language.

Example 3:

In the trailer, the translation of the place name "龙宫" is different from that of "陈塘关". When translating, simply translate "龙" as "dragon" and "宫" as "palace", which together make up the Dragon Palace. The reason for this translation may be that English audiences are more familiar with the word 'dragon'. Although "dragon" can also be translated as "Loong", which better reflects that it is a dragon in Chinese culture rather than a dragon in Western stories (in Western culture, dragons are usually considered evil monsters), the translation of "Loong" has not yet been accepted by most English speaking countries. So, the translation still used the more familiar dragon.

Example 4:

The four-character idiom "千载良机" (a rare opportunity) is a modifier-noun structure. It is translated as "once-in-a-millennium chance," preserving both its meaning and structural pattern through literal translation.

3.2 Domestication of Culture-Loaded Terms

1) Free Translation

Free translation typically involves figurative rephrasing of meaning and rhetoric to reproduce the sense of the original text more fluently and idiomatically.

Example 5:

"一身正气" is translated as "He's all about righteousness." The original adjective phrase is restructured into a full English sentence while preserving the idiomatic meaning of the four-character expression.

Example 6:

"滔天罪行," defined in Chinese as a monstrous or boundless crime, is translated as "unforgivable sins" in the trailer, which slightly weakens the intensity of the original expression. The idiom "鸡犬不留," literally "no chicken or dog left behind," is translated as "Not a soul shall remain," omitting the original animal imagery and replacing it with a more familiar English expression—an obvious example of domestication.

2) Imitative Translation

There are two common ways of "imitative translation": one is simplification, which means only translating the general meaning; Another approach is expansion, which involves adding more explanations than the original text in the translation.

This method is reflected in the translation of the expression "报仇雪恨". There are two idioms in the original Chinese sentence "这是报仇雪恨的千载良机". The phrase '千载良机' was directly translated into English in the subtitles, preserving its meaning; And '报仇雪恨' has been simplified into an English word, with the aim of making the subtitles look clearer, less crowded, and adaptable to the limited space on the screen.

Overall, there is no fixed method used when translating words with strong Chinese cultural connotations in trailers. On the contrary, the translator flexibly combines the strategies of "preserving Chinese characteristics" and "making it easier for foreigners to understand", making subtitles read smoothly and naturally, which not only conforms to the film's picture style, but also helps foreign audiences better understand and accept the film content.

4. Integration of Foreignization and Domestication in Translating Limerick

Limerick is a form of humorous and colloquial verse that does not strictly adhere to prosody, parallelism, or tonal patterns, but always maintains rhyme. It is usually composed of five- or seven-character lines. This form of poetry is accessible, witty, and often carries a satirical or playful tone. Therefore, when translating doggerel, it is important to not only convey the original meaning accurately but also consider the receptiveness of the target-language audience.

The overseas trailer of *Ne Zha 2* features one such doggerel poem. The original Chinese text is:

我乃哪吒三太子，
能降妖来会做诗。
今日到此除奸恶，
尔等妖孽快受死。

Its English translation is as follows:
I am Nezha, the Third Prince Bold!
I slay the demons, I write in rhyme untold.
Today I come to rid the evil's breath.
You wicked fiends, prepare for death!

This poem is Nezha's introduction to himself when facing the character "Shen Zhengdao". It vividly portrays the image of Nezha, who is both righteous and somewhat mischievous, with both the innocence and cuteness of a child and the heroic aura.

From the perspective of rhythm, the first, second, and fourth lines of the original poem rhyme, which reads smoothly and rhythmically. The English translation also retains this sense of rhythm, using parallelism and rhyme: the first and second lines rhyme, and the third and fourth lines also rhyme, effectively restoring the catchy feeling of Chinese folk songs. The third line also uses the common English phrase "rising pentatonic steps" (a natural and smooth rhythm) to make the entire poem more musical.

Structurally, the original Chinese poem consists of four lines, each with seven characters; The English version is also four lines long, roughly the same, maintaining the format of the original poem and looking very neat and consistent.

In terms of translation techniques, the first line uses pinyin transliteration for "哪吒", while "三太子" is a literal translation, meaning "the third prince". The word 'demon' in the second line is translated as' demon 'in English. According to the dictionary, "妖" in Chinese mythology refers to magical, strange, and terrifying creatures; In Western culture, 'demon' usually refers to an evil soul or ghost. So this translation is intended to make it easier for foreign audiences to understand, and it is a "localization" approach that is closer to their culture.

In general, the translation of this poem does not only use a fixed method, but flexibly combines the two methods of "preserving Chinese characteristics" and "making it easy for foreigners to understand", achieving good results. This approach not only respects the cultural characteristics of the original text, but also allows foreign audiences to better understand and accept this poem.

5. Conclusion

Through the research on the subtitle translation of the overseas trailer "*Ne Zha 2*", we can see that the translator does not use only one translation method when dealing with words and poems with strong Chinese cultural characteristics, but flexibly combines the two ideas of "preserving Chinese characteristics" and "making it easier for foreigners to understand".

When translating cultural related words, such as directly

transliterating or translating the literal meaning using pinyin, this approach tends to "preserve the Chinese flavor"; However, if it is translated in a way that is more familiar to foreigners, it is biased to "make it easier for the audience to understand". Similarly, when translating poetry, translators do not rigidly copy the original text, but flexibly handle the situation to naturally integrate the two translation strategies.

This method not only preserves the original cultural characteristics of the film, but also allows foreign audiences to understand and resonate with it, playing a positive role in spreading Chinese culture. As more and more Chinese films go global, the role of subtitle translation will become increasingly important. We also hope to see more high-quality translation works in the future to help the world better understand Chinese culture.

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