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Untranslatability and Compensation Strategies in Subtitle Translation for Dialect Micro-Dramas: A Japanese Subtitling Case Study of *My Sweet Home*

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Abstract: ***Amid the global expansion of Chinese micro-dramas, the translation of dialect-based micro-dramas has emerged as a new and challenging field. Taking the Japanese subtitling of the Sichuan dialect micro-drama "My Sweet Home" as a case study, this paper investigates untranslatability and compensation strategies in subtitling dialect micro-dramas. The findings reveal that untranslatability primarily manifests at four levels: dialectal words, culture-specific items, address terms, and two-part allegorical sayings. To address these challenges, translators need to flexibly apply the four compensation strategies proposed by Hervey and Higgins—compensation in kind, compensation in place, compensation by merging, and compensation by splitting. The selection of compensation strategies is a context-driven dynamic process, with the multimodal coordination of visuals and tone (compensation in place) serving as an indispensable aid across all levels. When structural differences exist between Chinese and Japanese, translation practice shifts from lexical correspondence to systemic pragmatic reconstruction. This study offers strategic references for Japanese subtitling of dialect micro-dramas and validates the applicability of compensation theory in Chinese-Japanese translation.***

Keywords: Subtitle translation, Compensation strategies, Dialect micro-dramas, Chinese-Japanese translation.

1. Introduction

In recent years, Chinese micro-dramas, characterized by their fast pace, high conflict, and life-oriented themes, have rapidly emerged as a new force in content going global. According to the White Paper on the Development of China's Micro-drama Industry (2025) released by the China Netcasting Services Association, the overseas micro-drama market generated a total revenue of $1.525 billion from January to August 2025, a year-on-year increase of 194.9%. Among the top 20 overseas micro-drama applications by revenue, 90% have Chinese backgrounds. Separately, citing predictions from market research firms, the Economic Information Dailyreported that the Japanese vertical-screen micro-drama market could reach as high as $1 billion in 2026, potentially becoming the second-largest overseas market after the United States. Within this rapidly growing market, dialect micro-dramas, with their unique regional-cultural characteristics, have begun to attract scholarly attention. In 2025, the subtitled version of the Sichuan dialect micro-drama *My Sweet Home* was released overseas, where it won acclaim from international viewers on major platforms. Its approach of "retaining dialect audio with subtitle translation" gained wide recognition. Should such micro-dramas be introduced to the Japanese market, the translation of dialect content would therefore become a pressing issue to address.

The difficulty of dialect translation is rooted in the inherent linguistic characteristics of dialects themselves. As regional linguistic variants, dialects carry unique emotional connotations, cultural imagery, and social identity. When a dialect enters the translation process, its colloquial stylistic features, rich cultural implicatures, and context-specific pragmatic functions often lack exact equivalents in the target language. This constitutes the core challenge distinguishing dialect translation from the translation of standard language.

Research on dialect translation between Chinese and Japanese remains relatively limited, with the existing body of work predominantly concentrated in the field of traditional literature. Current scholarship has primarily evolved along two main trajectories. The first involves the examination of dialect translation in literary classics, such as analyses of Japanese translation strategies for dialects in works like Dream of the Red Chamber [9]. The second trajectory consists of focused studies on specific linguistic phenomena, including proverbs, as exemplified by a Skopos-theory-based comparative analysis of proverb translation in Water Margin [8]. Collectively, these studies underscore that dialect translation entails a complex, multi-layered process of reconstruction, involving the transposition of linguistic forms, cultural connotations, and pragmatic functions. However, extant research has scarcely addressed dialect translation in audiovisual, multimodal texts such as films and television dramas, and has yet to engage with the burgeoning domain of dialect micro-dramas and their associated subtitling practices. This identified research gap establishes the necessary space and rationale for the present study.

Therefore, grounded in the compensation strategy theory of Hervey and Higgins, this study employs *My Sweet Home* as a case study. It examines the primary levels at which untranslatability manifests in the Japanese translation of Sichuan dialect micro-dramas, along with the application of corresponding compensation strategies. By analyzing four types of typical dialogue—dialectal words, culture-specific items, address terms, and proverb—this paper aims to provide actionable strategic references for the Japanese translation of dialect micro-dramas, thereby addressing the practical needs arising from the wave of micro-drama expansion overseas.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptualization and Evolution of Compensation

Translation compensation refers to a process whereby, when certain formal features or cultural connotations of the source text cannot be directly transferred, the translator makes up for

the loss at a different point or through a different means in the target text to achieve an overall equivalent effect. The concept finds its theoretical underpinning in Nida's (1964) principle of "functional equivalence," which prioritizes equivalence of effect over formal correspondence when the latter is unattainable. While terminology related to "compensation" appeared in translation studies literature as early as the 1960s and 1970s, its definition remained vague. Nida and Taber (1969), for instance, advocated for the use of appropriate idioms in the receptor language to compensate for semantic loss but did not specify categories of compensation. In the early 1980s, Wilss (1982) explicitly defined compensation as a technique for resolving differences in both intra- and extra-linguistic structures, suggesting "paraphrase" or "explanatory translation" as compensatory methods. By the late 1980s, Newmark (1988) further proposed that the effect lost at one point in the source text could be recreated at a different point in the target text. This notion of "displacement" laid the groundwork for subsequent classifications. Building upon these foundations, Hervey and Higgins (1992) systematized compensation into four distinct strategies: compensation in kind, compensation in place, compensation by merging, and compensation by splitting. They emphasized that these strategies are not mutually exclusive and can be employed in combination.

2.2 The Four Compensation Strategies

1) Compensation in Kind

Compensation in kind involves reproducing the effect of the source text by using a different, yet functionally analogous, linguistic resource in the target text [4]. The core of this strategy lies in achieving "functional equivalence" rather than "formal correspondence." For example, when a dialectal idiom is used in the source language, the translator may substitute it with a functionally similar idiom of a comparable register in the target language. Successful application of this strategy requires a profound understanding of the cultural-pragmatic systems of both languages.

2) Compensation in Place

Compensation in place involves recreating an effect, lost at a specific point in the source text, at a different location within the target text. In purely textual translation, this primarily refers to displacement within the verbal text [4]. However, in the translation of multimodal texts such as micro-dramas—the focus of this paper—the concept of "place" is extended beyond the verbal channel. When a specific effect (e.g., humor, intimacy, anger) cannot be adequately conveyed through adjusted subtitle placement alone, the translator may utilize other modalities such as visuals, tone of voice, or facial expressions to achieve compensatory effects.

3) Compensation by Merging

Compensation by merging involves condensing multiple features of the source text into a more concise form in the target text [4]. In textual translation, this often means compressing lengthy source-text features into a shorter target-language expression. In the context of multimedia texts like micro-dramas, this strategy must also account for non-linguistic information. It entails the fusion of intra-linguistic features with extra-linguistic cues from the visual and auditory context, resulting in an expression that is both idiomatic in the target language and faithful to the original message, thereby ensuring naturalness and fluency without compromising informational completeness.

4) Compensation by Splitting

Compensation by splitting involves expanding the meaning and features of a concise source-text expression into a longer, more explanatory segment in the target text [4]. For instance, a single word or short phrase in the original might be rendered as a longer descriptive phrase in the translation. This expansion allows the target audience to grasp the intended meaning accurately without needing to rely heavily on contextual inference, thereby enhancing comprehension and reducing potential ambiguity.

3. Research Methodology and Analytical Framework

To delve into untranslatability and compensation strategies in subtitling dialectal content, this study adopts an integrated case study method based on translation practice. The core case is the Sichuan dialect micro-drama *My Sweet Home* (Season 1). Given the current absence of an official Japanese subtitled version, the researcher performed the translation, thus assuming the dual role of researcher-translator to produce an experimental set of Japanese subtitles for the entire series, adhering to professional audiovisual translation standards. This design aims to construct the translation practice itself as an observable and reflective research process, thereby enabling the direct capture and examination of the application logic and decision-making rationale behind compensation strategies in specific contexts.

3.1 Case Selection and Corpus Construction

To ensure the systematic nature and representativeness of the analytical sample, this study employs purposive sampling. Based on a complete review of the series, the following three-tiered criteria were used to select typical lines for translation and analysis from the entire script:

Comprehensive coverage: Thus, ensuring that the final corpus encompasses the four predetermined categories of untranslatability—dialectal words, culture-specific items, address terms, and proverb —thereby achieving a complete research structure.

Contextual sensitivity: Priority is given to words that recur throughout the series or whose pragmatic functions change significantly with plot or character relationships, facilitating a focused investigation into the dynamics and context-dependency of compensation strategy selection.

Typicality of difficulty: Selected cases must centrally embody the core translational challenges of their respective category, such as cultural default, structural linguistic differences, or high pragmatic load.

3.2 Translation Practice and Decision-Making Documentation Process

Translation practice and academic analysis proceed concurrently in this study, forming a progressive research cycle:

Contextual documentation: A detailed contextual record is created for each line to be translated, clearly documenting the speaker's identity, interpersonal relationships, specific scene, emotional state, and all relevant non-linguistic cues (e.g., key visual information, tone of voice).

Multi-option generation and strategic decision-making: For each identified translation difficulty, multiple feasible translation options are generated under the guidance of Hervey and Higgins' compensation strategy framework. The research process systematically documents the finally adopted translation, the specific compensation strategy (or combination) applied, the excluded alternative(s), and the rationale for their exclusion.

Forming the analytical foundation: The complete translation decision records (including context, multi-option comparison, and strategic rationale) constitute the core empirical material for the subsequent theoretical analysis of the applicable conditions, effects, and limitations of the compensation strategies.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis of this study takes the decision records generated from the translation practice as its object, employing Hervey and Higgins' compensation theory for systematic, theory-driven analysis. The analysis of each case follows a clear three-step framework:

Diagnosis of untranslatability: In conjunction with the specific context, precisely identify and define the nature of the case's untranslatability (which of the four categories, or which intersection thereof) and its fundamental root cause.

Deconstruction of compensation strategy: Analyze the internal rationale behind the translator-researcher's choice of a specific compensation strategy (or combination) under given contextual constraints. The focus is on evaluating how this choice negotiates the trade-offs among multiple competing dimensions: formal correspondence, meaning transfer, preservation of cultural imagery, and realization of pragmatic function.

Examination of multimodal integration: Particular emphasis is placed on scrutinizing the pivotal role of "compensation in place" within the multimodal text. The analysis explores how the verbal subtitle is designed to anticipate and synergize with non-linguistic elements such as visuals, sound, and actor performance to collectively achieve the final overall functional equivalence.

It should be noted that the "researcher-as-translator" model adopted in this study offers the core advantage of providing microscopic, process-oriented evidence regarding strategic choices by delving into the internal decision-making process, a dimension difficult to obtain when analyzing existing translated works. To maximize the objectivity and rigor of the research, the entire translation and analysis process was consistently guided by the explicit theoretical framework of compensation, and all decision rationales were systematically recorded and subjected to post-hoc reflective scrutiny. The primary contribution of this study lies in extracting, through this rigorous practice-based analytical process, compensation strategy patterns and decision-making logic applicable to dialect multimodal translation. The validity and generalizability of these findings provide clear theoretical hypotheses and directions for subsequent empirical research based on audience reception.

4. Case Analysis

Building on the research methodology and analytical framework established in Chapter 3, this chapter delves into an examination of the selected representative cases. The analysis sequentially dissects the untranslatability and the corresponding translation compensation strategies across the following four key dimensions: dialectal words, culture-specific items, address terms, and proverbs.

4.1 Untranslatability of Dialectal Words and Its Compensation

According to linguistic definition, a dialectal word refers to "a word that is prevalent only within a specific dialect region" [6]. Its core characteristics are regionality, orality, and cultural specificity. In the micro-drama *My Sweet Home*, Sichuan dialectal words not only convey basic semantic information but also, by virtue of their unique stylistic color and pragmatic functions, act as key vehicles for shaping character identities and creating a regional atmosphere. Consequently, the difficulty in translating dialectal words extends far beyond lexical gaps. The core challenge lies in how to reconstruct their pragmatic and emotional effects in the target language, which requires the translator to delve into specific contexts and perform dynamic adaptation and compensation.

Example 1

Original: 我儿子怎么娶了你这么个没素质的歪婆娘哦。
Japanese Translation: 息子がどうしてあんたみたいな無教養なじゃじゃ馬を娶ったんだ。

Example 2

Original: 只有我这样的歪婆娘，才能对付你妈，保护好你娃儿。
Japanese Translation: 私みたいな気の強い女じゃなきゃ、あなたのお母さんには対抗できないし、子どもも守れないよ。

The Sichuan dialectal term "wai po niang" (歪婆娘) is a typical context-dependent address term. Its core semantics point to "a woman with a fierce, hot-tempered, and formidable character." However, its emotional connotation and evaluative function can be either pejorative or commendatory, entirely determined by the speaker, the

addressee, and the situational context. In the pejorative context of Example 1, where a mother-in-law scolds her daughter-in-law, the term constitutes a hostile insult emphasizing the woman's viciousness and unreasonableness. The translator employs the compensation in kind strategy, rendering it as "じゃじゃ馬". According to the Japanese dictionary, "じゃじゃ馬" is defined as: literally, a wild or unruly horse that is difficult to tame (人になかなか慣れない暴れ馬); figuratively, a person who is not easily controlled by others, specifically referring to a willful, disobedient woman, a shrew, or a tomboy (人の制御に従わない人。特に、不従順な妻や娘などをいう).The metaphor of a "hard-to-tame wild horse" functionally corresponds to the imagery of "wai" (歪, meaning askewor unruly). This translation swiftly activates a negative evaluative frame for the Japanese audience, thereby accurately conveying the derogatory attitude and angry emotion of the original.

Example 3

Original: 给老子爬！
Japanese Translation: 失せろ

Example 4

Original: 你敢打老子妹妹？！
Japanese Translation: 俺の妹を殴るなんて

The word "laozi" (老子) appears frequently in this micro-drama. As the most representative first-person pronoun in the Sichuan dialect, its untranslatability stems from the structural differences between the personal pronoun systems of Sichuanese and Japanese. In the Sichuan dialect, "laozi" is an unmarked self-referential term with regard to gender and age. It can be used universally by various speakers and carries a range of pragmatic functions, from expressing angry threats to conveying intimate teasing. In contrast, the Japanese first-person pronoun system is highly gendered and age-graded (e.g., "俺" is male-specific, "あたし" is female-specific, "僕" is typically used by young males, and "わし" is often used by middle-aged or elderly males). Furthermore, the subject is frequently omitted in daily conversation depending on context. This means that when translating "laozi," the translator must adopt the compensation by merging strategy. Based on the speaker's gender and age in the visuals, as well as the contextual tone, the translator dynamically supplements sociolinguistic information absent in the original. They must also decide whether to make the subject explicit, ultimately integrating all elements into an expression that conforms to target-language norms.

In Case A (Example 3: a middle-aged woman angrily shouts, "给老子爬!"), "laozi" primarily functions as an intensifier. The translation merges this function into the imperative form "失せろ" while omitting the subject. The full force of the anger is conveyed through the actor's tone and expression (compensation in place).

In Case B (Example 4: a middle-aged man confronts, "敢打老子妹妹?!"), "laozi" simultaneously serves a dual function: as an angry self-reference and a marker of possessive relation ("my"). Accordingly, the translation selects the typical male pronoun "俺", which matches the speaker's identity, to form "俺の妹". Through compensation by merging, it simultaneously achieves emotional expression and relational demarcation.

4.2 Untranslatability of Culture-Specific Items and Compensation Strategies

Culture-specific items refer to those objects or concepts in the source culture that have specific referents but are either absent or misaligned in the target culture. In the micro-drama *My Sweet Home*, set in Sichuan in the 1980s, a multitude of cultural symbols loaded with the memories of a specific era and regional life appear, constituting one of the primary translation challenges. Therefore, the translation of such items is, in essence, the construction of a cognitive framework necessary for the target audience to understand the source items. The focus of compensation lies not in seeking mechanical equivalence at the lexical level, but in supplementing, through translational means, the knowledge of the referent or the historical-social context that the target audience lacks [5].

Example 5

Original: 快来吃早饭了，今天我买了麻圆和锅盔哦
Japanese Translation: 朝ごはんだよ。今日は麻圓 (マーユエン) っていうごま団子と、鍋盔 (グオクイ) っていう焼き餅を買ってきたよ。

"Mayuan" (麻圓) and "Guokui" (锅盔) are highly representative Sichuan specialty snacks with no direct equivalents in Japanese culture. For a Japanese audience, these terms evoke no concrete imagery, much less the aura of regional life and mundane warmth they carry. Mere transliteration, while preserving a sense of "foreignness," would leave the audience completely adrift, lacking any cognitive anchor for the referent. Conversely, a detailed descriptive translation, while clarifying "what it is," would disrupt the original brevity and colloquial flow of the dialogue, making the subtitles appear verbose and stiff.

Faced with this, the translator adopts the compensation by merging strategy, rendering "Mayuan" and "Guokui" as "麻圓 (マーユエン) っていうごま団子" and "鍋盔 (グオクイ) っていう焼き餅", respectively. This approach achieves a triple function: First, the transliterations "マーユエン" and "グオクイ" preserve the items' status as proper nouns specific to Sichuan, signaling to the audience that these are culturally marked items. Second, classification using familiar Japanese food categories—"ごま団子" (sesame rice ball) and "焼き餅" (grilled cake/bread)—provides a quick cognitive schema, allowing the audience to grasp the general food category even without knowing the exact form. Third, the colloquial phrase "っていう" (meaning "called" or "which is a kind of") naturally integrates the explanatory content into the character's speech, avoiding a jarring, inserted feel and maintaining the fluent, conversational tone of the line. This "transliteration + categorization" method of compensation

strikes a balance between recognizing uniqueness and ensuring cognitive efficiency, representing an effective strategy for handling food-related culture-specific items in subtitling.

Example 6

Original: 你哪里搞的电视机票啊?
Japanese Translation: テレビの購入券 (配給切符) って、どこで手に入れたの?

“Dian shi ji piao” (电视机票, television ticket) is a special coupon from the era of the planned economy. It is not merely the name of an object but a term condensed with a specific institutional context and historical memory—material shortages, purchase-by-coupon, and planned distribution. For a Japanese audience lacking this historical background, the logical connection between “television” and “ticket” cannot be naturally established, let alone an understanding of why buying a TV would require a special “ticket” and why the source of this “ticket” would be inquired about in a tone of surprise. A simple literal translation as “テレビのチケット” would only convey the superficial information of “a ticket for a TV,” failing to convey the underlying social implication of “scarcity” and “hard-to-obtain,” causing the implicit tone of surprise in the original line to be lost.

To address this, the translation employs the compensation by splitting strategy, deconstructing the multiple layers of information condensed in the term “television ticket” into explicit expressions: “テレビの購入券 (配給切符) “. This treatment involves two layers of informational compensation: First, “購入券” (purchase coupon) clarifies the core function of the coupon—it is required to purchase a television, explaining “why a ticket is needed.” Second, the parenthetical “配給切符” (ration coupon/票) specifies its underlying social-institutional attribute—it is a product of the rationing system under the planned economy. The term “配給” (rationing) is not entirely unfamiliar in Japan and can evoke collective memories of similar coupon systems during post-war periods of scarcity, thereby helping the audience construct the historical-social cognitive framework needed to understand this item. Meanwhile, the character’s expression and tone of voice in the visuals serve as compensation in place, further aiding the audience in comprehending the speaker’s surprise. Through the combination of decomposition and displacement, the translation enables the audience not only to understand “what this is” but also to perceive “why it is significant.”

4.3 Untranslatability of Address Terms and Compensation Strategies

Address terms are the linguistic mirror of interpersonal relationships, and the difficulty in their translation is rooted in deep-seated structural differences in perspective between languages. The Chinese kinship terminology system embodies a “lexicalized perspective,” directly encoding complex relations—such as paternal/maternal lineage, consanguineal/affinal ties, and seniority/generation—into precise single lexical items. Comprehension relies on the lexical form itself. In contrast, the Japanese address system exhibits interactivity and context-dependence, where the definition of relationships relies more on specific conversational situations than on pre-existing lexical forms [7]. This structural difference in perspective leads to a fundamental asymmetry in translation: the highly self-sufficient, lexicalized address terms in Chinese often face lexical gaps in Japanese. Consequently, the core task of translating address terms shifts from pursuing formal equivalence at the lexical level to ensuring, through compensation strategies, that character relationships are clearly discernible within the specific context, from the interactive perspective of the target language.

Example 7

Original: 听说你的小姑子二婚了，嫁给哪个的哟
Japanese Translation: 夫の妹、再婚したんだってね。誰と?

Example 8

Original: “奶奶，我后妈娘家的哥哥来跟舅公抢工作了”
Japanese Translation: おばあちゃん、継母の実家の兄さんが、大叔父の仕事を奪おうとしてるんだって。

In Example 7, “xiaoguzi” (小姑子) refers to a husband’s younger sister. While Japanese has the word “こじゅうと”, its usage is relatively infrequent and, crucially, it does not distinguish between “husband’s sister” and “wife’s sister,” making it inadequate for accurately conveying the referent in the original text. Therefore, the translation decomposes it into “夫の妹”, making the implied relationship explicit. “Jiugong” (舅公) here refers to the grandmother’s brother. The Japanese term “大叔父” refers to a grand-uncle or a great-uncle (parent’s uncle) and cannot directly reveal the specific relationship of “this is the grandmother’s brother.” Japanese audiences would still need to rely on context or additional explanation to understand the referent accurately. For the term “jiugong,” which appears multiple times in the drama, the translation adopts a phased approach: during its first occurrence, it is translated as “大叔父 (祖母の弟) “, great-uncle (grandmother’s younger brother), using compensation by splitting to explicitly state the relationship “grandmother’s brother,” thereby helping the Japanese audience establish the cognitive framework. In subsequent occurrences, it is uniformly rendered as”大叔父”, using compensation in kind by employing an existing Japanese kinship term to maintain consistency. This approach follows the audience’s cognitive process and strikes a balance between informational completeness and naturalness of expression, ensuring the Japanese audience can accurately understand the family tree.

Example 9

Original: 我给爽娃做个厚衣服。
Japanese Translation: 爽ちゃんに厚い服を作ってあげる。

The suffix “wa” (娃) in the Sichuan dialect, used as a term of endearment, possesses three core characteristics: First, it is

gender-unmarked. It can be used for both boys and girls, and even retained by parents for adults to express affection. Second, it is highly productive, capable of being attached to almost any personal name to form a nickname. Third, it carries a sense of regional identity.

This "name + wa" construction has no direct equivalent in Japanese. Although Japanese uses name + "ちゃん"to express endearment, and "ちゃん" is also gender-unmarked, an essential difference exists: "ちゃん" lacks the regional identity conveyed by a dialectal suffix. A Japanese audience hearing "ちゃん" can only perceive "affection," not "this is Sichuan dialect." The translation adopts compensation by merging, rendering "Shuangwa" as "爽ちゃん". It should be noted that while Japanese also uses "くん" as a nickname for boys, "くん" carries a slight nuance of respect, making it more suitable for school or social settings. In contrast, "ちゃん" conveys a higher degree of affection and intimacy, more closely aligning with the doting tone parents use when calling their child "~wa" in a family context. Therefore, choosing "ちゃん" in this domestic context better matches the pragmatic function of the original.

4.4 Untranslatability of Proverbs and Their Compensation

Proverbs represent the quintessence of dialectal speech and constitute a significant challenge in translation. Their complexity stems from the fact that they are not ordinary phrases but fixed expressions that integrate specific cultural imagery, linguistic structures, and rhetorical patterns. Moreover, their colloquial rhythm and intended humorous effect are indispensable stylistic features, which further complicates transposition. Such expressions appear frequently throughout the drama, playing a key role in creating a vivid street-life atmosphere and characterizing personae. However, their concise form and deep cultural embeddedness make them highly susceptible to the loss of imagery, structural disintegration, and dissipation of wit in cross-lingual transfer. Consequently, the core task of translation lies in negotiating trade-offs among multiple competing dimensions—including the moral, the imagery, the form, and the stylistic effect—and, through pluralistic compensation strategies, achieving a "recreation" of their comprehensive rhetorical function in the target language.

Example 10

Original: 偷鸡不成蚀把米。
Japanese Translation: 虻蜂取らずだな。

This is a widely known proverb, metaphorically meaning "trying to gain an advantage only to end up worse off." Its "untranslatability" resides primarily at the stylistic level—namely, the concise form, colloquial rhythm, and rhetorical flair on which it depends. A literal translation such as "鶏を盗もうとして米を失う" would, due to its unfamiliar imagery and verbose structure, reduce the saying to a mere explanation, stripping it of its proverbial vitality. A free translation like "得をしようとして損をする", while conveying the moral, would lose the rhetorical force of a fixed expression. Therefore, the translation opts for the compensation in kind strategy, rendering it with the native Japanese proverb "虻蜂取らず" (literally "failing to catch both the horsefly and the bee"). The two share an identical core moral and possess similarly concise, colloquial characteristics, thereby achieving a maximal equivalence in stylistic function.

Example 11

Original: 这个杨建国，真是癞蛤蟆耍青蛙，长得丑耍得花。
Japanese Translation: この楊建国ったら、まるでヒキガエルがカエルと遊んでるみたいに、ブサイクのくせに女関係で派手にやってるよ。

"Shua de hua" (耍得花) in Sichuan dialect specifically refers to frivolous behavior in romantic or sexual relationships. Thus, the core critique of this xiehouyu (two-part allegorical saying) lies not in physical appearance but in the conduct of "an ugly person making a showy fuss." Its untranslatability manifests on three levels: First, the cultural specificity of the imagery — the toad is often used as a symbol of "ugliness" in Chinese culture, whereas Japanese lacks an equivalent cultural association. Second, the unreproducibility of the structure — the two-part "riddle-plus-answer" structure of the xiehouyu has no direct counterpart in Japanese. Third, the complexity of the pragmatic function—the specific referent of "shua de hua" requires knowledge of the plot to be fully understood.

The translation employs compensation by splitting to deconstruct its "riddle-answer" structure: the riddle part is translated literally as a simile, "まるでヒキガエルがカエルと遊んでるみたいに", to preserve the core cultural imagery. The answer part is translated freely as "ブサイクのくせに女関係で派手にやってるよ", with the addition of "女関係で" ("in matters with women") to clarify the pragmatic implication targeting "frivolity in relationships."

Simultaneously, compensation in place plays a crucial role. The audience, based on prior knowledge of the character's infidelity, can quickly associate the "ugliness" imagery of the toad with the specific accusation of "showiness with women" in the translation. The speaker's mocking expression in the visuals further reinforces the critical tone. Although the original xiehouyu's distinctive two-part rhythm and verbal playfulness are difficult to recreate, by deconstructing its semantic core and reconstructing it within the multimodal context, the translation ultimately succeeds in conveying its core functions of satire and evaluation.

5. Conclusion

This study, using the Japanese subtitling of *My Sweet Home* as a case study, examined four types of untranslatability in dialect subtitle translation and their corresponding compensation strategies. The findings reveal that the choice of compensation strategy exhibits significant context-dependency and typological variation. Compensation in place, as a multimodal auxiliary means, functions across all levels, with the coordination of visuals and tone being crucial for achieving the overall effect in subtitling. This research

validates the applicability of Hervey and Higgins' compensation theory in Japanese-Chinese dialect subtitling and provides strategic references for translating dialect micro-dramas into Japanese.

This study has the following limitations: First, the corpus is limited to the first season of *My Sweet Home*, resulting in a limited coverage of cases. It does not encompass all types of dialectal words and culture-specific items, and the generalizability of the conclusions requires verification with more corpus data. Second, the theoretical dialogue could be deepened. Future research could integrate Hervey and Higgins' compensation strategies with domestic Chinese scholars' theories on explicit and implicit compensation to construct an analytical framework more suited to Japanese-Chinese translation. Subsequent studies could expand the corpus scope by introducing other dialect micro-dramas for comparative analysis. Furthermore, methods such as questionnaires and focus groups could be employed to collect audience feedback, using empirical data to verify the actual effects of different compensation strategies.

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