



# **Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Global Communication: An Empirical Study on Subtitle Translation Strategies of Disney Animated Films**

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**Abstract:**With the rapid growth of global film and television media consumption, animated films have emerged as a crucial carrier for cross-cultural communication. As a global leader in the animation industry, the Walt Disney Company faces the core challenge of subtitle translation in the cross-cultural dissemination of its works. This study takes the official English-Chinese subtitles of Disney's animated film series released in the past decade (including Frozen, Zootopia, Coco, Soul, Inside Out, Up, Big Hero 6 and Zootopia 2) as the research object, and conducts an empirical study on their translation strategies by integrating the Functional Equivalence Theory, Communicative Translation Theory, Cultural Discount Theory and Cross-Cultural Identity Theory. The findings reveal that Disney's subtitle translation team has developed a systematic and innovative strategic framework for linguistic expression in subtitle translation: Firstly, through the strategies of cultural substitution and localized implantation, the original cultural images are skillfully transformed into cultural symbols familiar to the target language audience. Secondly, creative reconstruction techniques are adopted to handle language games and humorous elements, realizing the cross-cultural transmission of comedic effects while preserving the original meaning. Thirdly, through rhythm simulation and tempo adjustment, the subtitle texts are made to conform to the natural and fluent characteristics of spoken Chinese. Fourthly, a hierarchical translation strategy is implemented to meet the different comprehension needs and aesthetic expectations of both child and adult audiences. These translation strategies not only reflect the creative adaptation in the translation process but also embody the audience-centered localization philosophy. This study further reveals the dual effects behind these strategies: on the one hand, successful subtitle translation significantly enhances the distinctiveness of animated characters' personalities, the immediate appeal of humorous expressions, and the accessibility of cultural information, which helps eliminate cross-cultural cognitive barriers and construct cross-cultural identity; on the other hand, excessive localization or over-reliance on time-sensitive buzzwords may lead to rapid obsolescence of translations and even cause cultural distortion, hindering the effective dissemination of global cultural products. The author maintains that excellent subtitle translation for animated films needs to establish a dynamic balance between cultural adaptability and the preservation of the original work's spirit, and seek the optimal fit between language conversion and creative rewriting. This study not only enriches the theoretical system of subtitle translation but also provides practical implications for the localization of global cultural products and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding in the context of globalization.

**Keywords:** Subtitle Translation; Disney Animation; Localization Strategy; Functional Equivalence Theory; Communicative Translation Theory; Cross-cultural Communication; Global Cultural Communication; Cross-cultural Adaptation

## 1. Introduction

In the digital media era, the transnational circulation of film and television works has become one of the most prominent features of cultural globalization. However, the phenomenon of "cultural discount" in cross-cultural communication is increasingly prominent, and the differences in cultural backgrounds and cognitive habits between audiences in various countries have become major obstacles to the dissemination of global cultural products. As a benchmark in the global animation industry, Disney's works have not only created astonishing commercial value but also become a shared cultural memory and emotional bond for audiences worldwide. From *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which pioneered the feature-length animated film, to the *Frozen* series that sparked a global phenomenon, and the *Zootopia* series that addressed social prejudice through the exquisite metaphor of an animal utopia, Disney has continuously demonstrated the extraordinary potential of animation art to transcend time, space and cultural barriers.

In this dissemination process, subtitle translation plays a vital role as a "cultural governance tool" in cross-cultural communication. As a "linguistic bridge" for film and television works to enter heterogeneous cultural markets, subtitles must not only accurately convey the semantic information of the original work and reproduce its artistic style, emotional tension and cultural features but also effectively reduce cultural discount and promote audience recognition of foreign cultures. Compared with live-action films, subtitle translation for animated films faces more complex challenges: the characters are mostly non-human images, with more creative and exaggerated language styles; the audience covers a wide age range, requiring the translation to satisfy both children's comprehension abilities and adults' aesthetic expectations; cultural elements are often presented in a fantasy form, necessitating the finding of an appropriate translation balance between reality and fiction. Especially in recent years, the narratives of Disney's animated films have become increasingly complex and the themes more diverse, placing higher artistic demands on subtitle translation.

Subtitle translation exerts a decisive influence on the quality of animated film subtitles. It refers to the translator making the translated text conform to the expression habits, rhythm and communicative norms of daily spoken target language on the basis of respecting the original work, so that the audience can have the natural feeling that "The characters are speaking my language". This translation orientation is particularly important in the animated context: Firstly, the dialogue design of animated characters is usually more vivid, exaggerated and full of personality traits than that of live-action films, requiring corresponding colloquial expressions to maintain the characters' charm. Secondly, the humorous elements in animated films often rely on the immediate effect of language, and subtitle translation can maximize the retention of comedic impact. Thirdly, the cognitive characteristics of child audiences require subtitles to be concise, clear and catchy, while the viewing expectations of adult audiences demand richer cultural connotations and linguistic interest.

However, systematic academic research on subtitle translation strategies for animated films remains insufficient currently. Most film translation studies focus on universal principles, lacking in-depth discussions targeting animation as a special genre; existing literature on Disney translation mostly centers on cultural adaptation or ideological analysis, with insufficient attention paid to the social effects of translation strategies; a few studies mention the use of internet slang or buzzwords, but fail to examine them within a complete strategic framework combined with global cultural communication

theories. This research gap limits our comprehensive understanding of the laws of animated subtitle translation and also affects the effective guidance of relevant theories in the practice of global cultural product localization. Therefore, this study takes Disney animated film subtitles as the research object, explores the internal logic of translation strategies from the perspective of cross-cultural communication and cultural governance, and supplements the research on the social significance of subtitle translation.

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1 Case Selection Basis**

This study selects 8 Disney animated films released in the past decade as research cases, including *Frozen*, *Zootopia*, *Coco*, *Soul*, *Inside Out*, *Up*, *Big Hero 6* and *Zootopia 2*. These films have strong representativeness: in terms of cultural background, they involve multiple cultural contexts such as European and American culture, Mexican culture and Japanese culture; in terms of themes, they cover fantasy adventure, social metaphor, family ethics, philosophical thinking and other types; the audience group covers all ages, which can fully reflect the diverse demands of cross-cultural subtitle translation and ensure the comprehensiveness and validity of the research.

### **2.2 Data Collection and Analysis Framework**

The research data are derived from the official English subtitles and corresponding Chinese subtitles of the selected 8 films, ensuring the authority and authenticity of the data. The study constructs a three-dimensional analysis framework by integrating Functional Equivalence Theory, Communicative Translation Theory, Cultural Discount Theory and Cross-Cultural Identity Theory, with the evaluation dimensions including “cultural adaptation degree”, “semantic integrity”, “audience acceptance degree” and “cross-cultural communication effect”[1]. Through coding and statistical analysis of subtitle texts, the translation problems and corresponding strategy applications in cross-cultural communication are identified, and the internal connection between strategies and communication effects is explored.

## **3. Translation Problems in Disney’s Animated Film Series**

Through an in-depth study of Disney’s Animated Film Series translation, the following problems have been dug out, which have adverse effects on cross-cultural communication.

### **3.1 Failure in Handling Culture-loaded Words**

In *Zootopia 2*, Chief Bogo refers to Nick as an “orange dog”, which is translated as “臭狐狸 (chòu húli)”. Although this translation fits children’s cognition, it changes the original classification joke of “canine animal”, not only losing the original work’s humor but also possibly leading Chinese audiences to misunderstand the Western cultural classification logic, exacerbating cross-cultural cognitive barriers[2].

### **3.2 Deviation in Semantic Transmission**

In *Frozen*, the line “My soul is spiraling in frozen fractals all around” is translated as “我的灵魂盘旋在冰块各种不同形状 (wǒde línghún pánxuán zài bīngkuài gèzhǒng bùtóng xíngzhuàng)”, failing to convey the scientific and aesthetic connotation of “fractals” (fractal geometry, which reflects the delicate structure of ice and snow). This semantic deviation makes the target audience unable to accurately perceive the artistic conception and cultural connotation contained in the original text, affecting the cross-cultural transmission of aesthetic value[3].

### **3.3 Mismatch Between Subtitles and Visuals**

Short English sentences are translated into long Chinese sentences, resulting in insufficient subtitle display time and difficulty for the audience to read. For example, some subtitles for fast-paced dialogues in *Zootopia 2* appear as “splash screen” due to the large number of characters. The word

“fluffle” (a nickname for a group of rabbits) is translated as “兔子窝 (tùzi wō)”, which is easy to understand but loses the emotional semantics of “group belonging”, leading to the loss of cultural details in cross-cultural communication and reducing the audience’s sense of identity with the original work’s cultural context[4].

### **3.4 Issues with Naming Standardization and Consistency**

The same character has different translations in different series or versions. For example, the translations of some supporting roles in *Frozen* differ between the theater version and the streaming version, which is prone to cause confusion. In *Soul*, the words “soul” and “spirit” are translated inconsistently in different contexts, affecting the audience’s understanding of the setting[5]. This inconsistency disrupts the audience’s cognitive continuity, increases the difficulty of cross-cultural understanding, and is not conducive to the formation of stable cultural cognition.

### **3.5 Problems Caused by Production Processes and External Constraints**

When balancing the dual needs of children and adults, the translation strategy wavers. For example, some philosophical lines in *Coco* are too adult-oriented, while some funny lines are too childish, leading to a fragmented audience experience. This unbalanced translation strategy makes it difficult to meet the cognitive and aesthetic needs of different groups of audiences, reducing the overall effect of cross-cultural communication of the work[6].

## **4. Analysis and Research on Subtitle Translation Strategies for Disney’s Animated Films**

### **4.1 Cultural Loaded Words’ Cross-cultural Adaptation Strategy: Problems, Solutions and Communication Effects**

Cultural elements in animated films often constitute the main difficulty in translation, and the improper handling of cultural loaded words is likely to cause cultural discount. Disney’s subtitle translation team has developed a systematic cultural substitution strategy, whose core principle is: on the premise of preserving the spirit of the original work, replace the source cultural elements with functionally equivalent elements in the target culture to achieve a natural and smooth viewing experience and promote cross-cultural identity.

The gradient processing of culture-specific items reflects the refinement of the strategy. For culture-specific items with high cultural barriers, translators adopt a composite strategy of “functional description + cultural analogy”. In *Coco*, the Mexican traditional festival “Día de los Muertos” is translated as “亡灵节 (wánglíng jié)”[7]. This translation not only retains the core element of the original festival related to death but also reduces the comprehension difficulty through the general category of “节 (jié)” (festival). More ingeniously, the film naturally introduces the customs and significance of the festival through the combination of visual narration and line explanation, enabling Chinese audiences to understand the plot without background knowledge. This strategy not only improves the audience’s understanding but also promotes the effective dissemination of Mexican traditional culture in the Chinese-speaking world, reflecting the “cultural equality” principle in cross-cultural communication.

For elements with moderate cultural barriers, translators often adopt the “cultural metonym” strategy. In *Zootopia*, various details of the animal city allude to American social phenomena, such as the classic scene of sloths working at the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) to show its inefficiency. The Chinese subtitles do not literally translate “DMV” but render it as “车管所 (chēguǎn suǒ)” — a corresponding institution familiar to Chinese audiences. This seemingly minor replacement eliminates the comprehension barrier and allows the humor to be conveyed instantly, realizing the effective transfer of cultural connotations in cross-cultural communication.

In the analysis of subtitle translation for Disney's film series, the localized adaptation of emotional expression is reflected in the line from *Inside Out*, where Riley's father looks at the baby Riley happily and exclaims "Aren't you a little bundle of Joy", which is translated as "你真是我们的小天使 (nǐ zhēn shì wǒmen de xiǎo tiānshǐ)". This translation not only preserves the layered double meaning of the word "Joy", which both refers to the character's name "Joy" and the emotional implication, but also replaces the metaphorical structure of the original "bundle of joy" with the common Chinese expression "小天使 (xiǎo tiānshǐ)" used to praise infants through the cultural substitution strategy, thus realizing the localized transformation of emotion. This treatment not only conforms to the acceptance habits and cognitive framework of the target language audience but also embodies the balance between semantic retention and cultural adaptation in hierarchical localization, which helps to enhance the emotional resonance of cross-cultural audiences.

Cultural symbol adaptation reflects the cultural level adaptation strategy and the localized transplantation of emotional semantics, which belongs to the contextual rewriting of cultural symbols. Taking *Up* as an example, based on the setting of Carl's old wooden house and balloon journey, the subtitle translation renders "old place" as "老房子 (lǎo fángzi)" in key scenes instead of directly translating it as "家 (jiā)". In the Chinese context, "老房子 (lǎo fángzi)" contains distinct nostalgic and warm emotions. Through the localized reconstruction of cultural images, it replaces the relatively generalized concept of the English "old place", thereby enhancing the emotional memory and historical thickness carried by the house and realizing the symbolic conversion and emotional resonance in the cross-cultural context.

Regarding the cultural adaptation strategy in subtitle translation, in *Big Hero 6*, the translator abandons the literal translation of the protagonist "Hiro Hamada" as "宏·滨田 (Hóng·Bīntián)" and instead uses "小宏 (Xiǎo Hóng)". This translation not only retains the syllabic correspondence of the source language name but also avoids the unfamiliarity of Japanese surnames in the Chinese context by selecting common affixes of affectionate address in Chinese, conforming to the target language audience's cognitive habits of adolescent characters. The translation of another character "Baymax" as "大白 (Dà Bái)" reflects the characteristic-highlighting free translation strategy: the word "大 (Dà)" emphasizes its physical size, and "白 (Bái)" directly corresponds to its visual appearance. The overall translation is concise and clear, with low cognitive load, easy to remember and spread, and eventually becomes a classic translation example widely accepted by Chinese-speaking audiences, reflecting the high acceptability and communication effect of the translated name in the cross-cultural context<sup>[7]</sup>.

Core emotional lines achieve cross-cultural empathy through localized reconstruction. For example, in *Zootopia 2*, Nick's line "You are my pack" is translated as "你是我的依靠 (nǐ shì wǒ de yīkào)". Here, the Chinese word "依靠 (yīkào)" is used to conceptually replace and reconstruct the image of the animal community-specific term in the original text. While conveying the intimate relationship and sense of belonging between the characters, it completes the cross-cultural adaptation of emotional meaning, thereby enhancing the acceptability and understanding of the line among the all-age audience and promoting the emotional connection in cross-cultural communication.

#### **4.2 Creative Reconstruction Strategy for Language Games and Humor: Problems, Solutions and Communication Effects**

Humor is an important source of charm for animated films and also one of the biggest challenges in subtitle translation<sup>[8]</sup>. The loss of humorous effects due to linguistic and cultural differences is a common problem in cross-cultural communication. When facing language games, puns and cultural

humor, Disney's translation team has developed a creative reconstruction strategy, whose core concept is: abandon the surface form correspondence and pursue the equivalent effect of comedic effects.

The multi-path processing of puns demonstrates the flexibility of the strategy. When puns are difficult to directly convert based on linguistic characteristics, translators may adopt the "compensatory creation" strategy. In *Zootopia*, the sloth's name "Flash" constitutes a speed-ironic pun (the English word "flash" means lightning-fast). This pun cannot be preserved in Chinese, so the translator instead creates a new comedic logic: the extremely slow speaking rhythm of the character forms a strong contrast with the name "闪电 Shǎndiàn" (Lightning), and a large number of ellipsis are used in the subtitles to simulate the stuttering effect, such as "也.....很高兴.....见到.....你(yě.....Hěn gāoxìng.....jiàn dào nǐ.)". This treatment creates the same or even stronger comedic effect through the comprehensive audio-visual means, ensuring the cross-cultural transmission of humorous elements.

The game-oriented translation of adventure tasks in *Up* shows that the translation team renders Russell's "Assisting the Elderly task" as "帮助老人勋章 ('bāngzhù lǎorén' xūnzhāng)". This treatment adopts a task-oriented translation method, creatively transforming the task concept derived from the Western Boy Scout system into a game framework familiar to local audiences by imitating the interactive mechanism of "completing tasks and obtaining badges" in Chinese children's games. This transformation not only realizes the local adaptation of cultural references but also strengthens the comedic effect of the text through contextual reconstruction, embodying the active handling of humorous elements in subtitle translation during cross-cultural communication.

The localized proverbial translation of philosophical expressions is adopted too. For example, in *Zootopia 2*, the line of Judy's father "You can be right or you can be happy" is translated as "讲理赢一时, 糊涂赢一世 (jiǎnglǐ yíng yīshí, hútú yíng yīshì)". This translation adopts the Chinese antithetical sentence structure and proverbial form, which not only retains the philosophy of life contained in the original line but also enhances the communication power and appeal of the line among the target language audience through the optimization of phonological rhythm and the domestication of expression form, realizing the cross-cultural creative reconstruction of humorous effects and life insights. Another example is when Judy says that Nick let more than 200 fugitives escape during his prison break, and Nick replies "Worth it", which is translated as "怪我咯 (guài wǒ lo)". This is a Chinese internet buzzword with a playful and rascally tone, which fits Nick's cynical character and allows the audience to quickly get the punchline. However, it deviates from the core meaning of the original sentence "Worth it" (meaning it was worth it), and has a weak logical connection with the act of "letting fugitives escape". The audience needs to infer Nick's subtext based on the context, losing the original's arrogant sense of "knowing the consequences but still thinking it was worth it". A better translation would be "这波不亏 (zhè bō bù kuī)" or "很值啊 (hěn zhí a)", which grafts the value judgment words in the game context into the film line translation, not only retaining the original semantics but also strengthening the humorous effect with the game memes familiar to Chinese audiences.

The balanced transmission of humor and philosophy is realized through the vocabulary substitution of cultural adaptation. For example, in *Coco*, the original line "It's called the final death" is translated as "这叫终极死亡 (zhè jiào zhōngjí sǐwáng)". Instead of literal translation, the four-character structure is adopted, which not only conforms to the compact and concise expression habit of Chinese but also endows the concept with stronger semantic tension and a sense of finality through the word "终极 (zhōngjí)". This treatment accurately conveys the core setting of the film while maintaining the

philosophical depth of the life and death theme in the humorous context, achieving the dual adaptation of emotional tone and cultural understanding.

### **4.3 Spoken Language Rhythm and Character Language Personalization Strategy: Problems, Solutions and Communication Effects**

The language of animated characters is an important dimension to express their personalities. The lack of spoken language rhythm and personalized language features in translation will make the characters flat and affect the audience's sense of identity. Through sophisticated spoken language rhythm design and personalized language construction, Disney's subtitles make the Chinese characters equally vivid and distinctive, which is conducive to cross-cultural audience's understanding and recognition of the characters[9].

The systematic use of modal particles is the basic technique to create a sense of spoken Chinese. Compared with English, Chinese has richer sentence-final modal particles such as 啊, 呀, 呢, 嘛, 咯, etc (a, ya, ne, ma, lo, etc.). Although these words have no literal meaning, they can subtly convey emotions, attitudes and relationships. Disney's translation team has formed a certain pattern in the use of these modal particles: in joyful scenes, “呀 (ya)” and “啦 (la)” are mostly used (e.g., “我来啦! wǒ lái la!”); in questions or thinking, “呢 (ne)” is mostly used (e.g., “这是怎么回事呢? (zhè shì zěnmē huìshì ne?)”); in slight complaints or coquetry, “嘛 (ma)” is mostly used (e.g., “别这样嘛! (bié zhèyàng ma!)”); in affirmative or concluding tones, “咯 (lo)” is mostly used (e.g., “就这样咯! jiù zhèyàng lo!”). This systematic use helps the lines get rid of the translationese and close to the rhythm characteristics of real Chinese dialogues, improving the naturalness and fluency of cross-cultural communication[10].

The construction of personalized character language is an advanced translation art. Each main character should have unique linguistic characteristics, which need to be preserved or even strengthened in translation. In *Zootopia*, Judy the rabbit's language is characterized by vitality, slight naivety and occasional over-formality (reflecting her background as a top student in the police academy); Nick the fox's language is lazy, ironic and clever, good at playing with words; Flash the sloth's language is extremely slow, full of pauses. The Chinese subtitles successfully reproduce these characteristics: Judy's lines mostly use short exclamatory sentences and positive words; Nick's lines are full of puns and irony, with more complex sentence structures; Flash's lines create a slow effect through a large number of ellipsis and split words. The dialogues between characters thus generate rich linguistic chemical reactions, which is an important symbol of the success of subtitle translation and helps cross-cultural audiences quickly grasp the character traits.

The analysis of spoken language rhythm and character language personalization strategy shows that the translation realizes the cross-cultural reshaping of character language characteristics through the construction of reduplicative nickname structures and emotional naming strategies. Taking *Inside Out* as an example, the translation team renders the emotion characters Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger and Disgust as “乐乐/忧忧/怕怕/怒怒/厌厌 (Lèlè/Yōuyōu/Pàpà/Nùnu/Yànyan)” respectively. The “AA” reduplicative form of Chinese affectionate address is adopted, which enhances the recitability and memorability of the names by using phonetic iconicity and rhythmic repetition, conforming to the phonetic cognition and acceptance habits of child audiences. At the same time, the reduplicative structure naturally carries the affectionate and childish emotional color, forming a high image-character fit with the cartoon images and personality settings of the characters, thus enhancing the characters' recognizability and audience affinity in both phonetic and emotional dimensions.

*Up* also has examples that reflect distinct character personalities. For example, the young Ellie says to Carl “You know, you don’t talk very much... I like you!”, which is translated as “知道吗，你话不多..... 我喜欢你！(zhīdào ma, nǐ huà bù duō.....wǒ xǐhuān nǐ!)”. By retaining the phonetic pause marker “.....” of the original sentence, the translation reproduces the natural rhythm and sense of breath in spoken dialogue; at the same time, the concise and straightforward wording accurately corresponds to the character’s straightforward personality as a child, realizing the consistent construction of language form and character image, and reflecting the effective preservation and enhancement of personalized character language in cross-linguistic conversion.

Spoken language rhythm adaptation and character language personalization are the key strategies to ensure the fit between the translated language and character settings. Specifically, in *Big Hero 6*, the line translation of Baymax generally adopts short sentence structures and gentle declarative tones. For example, “Hello. I am Baymax, your personal healthcare companion.” is translated as “你好，我是大白，你的私人健康助手。(nǐ hǎo, wǒ shì Dà Bái, nǐ de sīrén jiànkāng zhùshǒu。 )”. This translation accurately conveys Baymax’s cute and gentle personality as a robot through concise wording and a calm tone, realizing the organic unity of language form and character setting. The line translation of Fred tends to use exclamatory sentence patterns and exaggerated expressions. For example, “Whoa! That’s awesome!” is translated as “哇哦！太酷了吧！(wāo! tài kù le ba!)”. Such translations effectively restore the character’s chatty and passionate personality through high-intensity emotional words and lively sentence-final modal particles, achieving a high degree of consistency between language style and character image. These two types of treatment methods jointly embody the character-driven translation strategy, that is, reconstructing and strengthening the characters’ recognizability and personality authenticity in the target language through the selective adjustment of syntax, tone and vocabulary, which is conducive to the cross-cultural transmission of character images.

#### **4.4 Information Optimization Strategy Under Temporal and Spatial Constraints: Problems, Solutions and Communication Effects**

Subtitle translation is subject to strict temporal and spatial constraints: each subtitle line usually does not exceed two lines, with a limited number of characters per line (about 7-15 Chinese characters), and the display time is synchronized with the character’s speaking time<sup>1</sup>. These constraints easily lead to the problem of incomplete information transmission. Therefore, translators need to develop concise and efficient information expression strategies to ensure the effective transmission of core information in cross-cultural communication.

Taking *Zootopia 2* as an example, the original sentence “Zootopia is a place where anyone can be anything” is translated as “在动物城，每个动物都有无限可能。(zài dòngwù chéng, měi gè dòngwù dōu yǒu wúxiàn kěnéng)”. This translation shortens the original clause structure, merges information units, and transforms the complex sentence into short clauses that conform to Chinese expression habits, realizing sentence compression and semantic conciseness. This treatment not only adapts to the temporal and spatial constraints of the single-line character limit of subtitles but also optimizes the balance between information density and visual display time, thus ensuring that the audience can quickly and accurately receive audio-visual information within a limited time and space.

Also in *Zootopia 2*, Mayor Lionheart’s pun response “I say nay” when refusing a request is translated as “我不同‘噫’(wǒ bù tóng ‘yì)”. “Nay” means no, and “neigh” is the sound a horse makes. The translation doubly restores both the pun semantics and the onomatopoeic effect without any information loss. The translation uses “不同 (bù tóng)” to correspond to the “refusal” semantics of “nay”, and “yì” to simulate the horse’s neighing sound “neigh”, accurately reproducing the core of the

original “semantics + onomatopoeia” pun without losing any punchlines or information. Within the limited duration of the film line, it achieves “one sentence carrying two meanings”, fully meeting the strategic requirement of “efficiently transmitting complete information” under temporal and spatial constraints. Instead of rigidly literal translating “nay” or “neigh”, the translation uses “不同 (bù tóng)” to clarify the semantics and “噫 (yì)” for intuitive onomatopoeia. This treatment ensures the completeness of information while maximizing the reduction of comprehension barriers, which is an excellent example of “balancing information density and audience acceptability” under temporal and spatial constraints.

Audio-visual complementary utilization is an advanced optimization strategy. Excellent translators will consider the information already provided by the images and sounds, and let the subtitles only convey the content that must be expressed through text. In action scenes, characters may speak while acting, and the subtitles can be more concise than the spoken language because the actions themselves convey part of the meaning. In musical scenes, lyrics translation needs to consider the melody rhythm, and sometimes the word order is adjusted or expressions with a specific number of characters are selected to match the beat. This multi-modal coordination ability is a key skill for professional film translators, which can effectively make up for the limitations of temporal and spatial constraints and improve the efficiency of cross-cultural information transmission[11].

Intelligent omission of cultural presuppositions is an important aspect of localization. Some cultural backgrounds that are self-evident to the source language audience may need explanation for the target audience, but detailed explanations cannot be provided due to temporal and spatial constraints. At this time, translators may choose two strategies: one is to slightly adjust the lines to naturally integrate the required background information into the dialogue; the other is to omit some cultural references without seriously affecting the understanding, trusting that the audience can infer through the context. For example, some details involving Mexican family culture in *Coco* are simplified in the Chinese version because the core of family emotions is cross-culturally universal, and the audience can understand the emotional logic even without knowing the specific cultural details. This strategy achieves the balance between information completeness and transmission efficiency in cross-cultural communication.

It is pointed out that the translation achieves efficient communication through the concise structural processing of conceptual terms and the correspondence with audio-visual information. For example, the core settings in *Inside Out*, “Core Memories/Personality Islands”, are translated as “核心记忆 / 性格岛屿 (héxīn jìyì/xìnggé dǎoyǔ)” respectively, adopting a compact noun structure of “attribute + headword”, which minimizes the audience’s cognitive load within the limited temporal and spatial scope of subtitles and promotes the rapid understanding of key concepts. Among them, the translation “记忆球 (jìyì qiú)” is particularly typical. It is not only highly concise in language form but also accurately co-“球 (qiú)”, thus achieving the synchronous reinforcement of subtitle text and image information and optimizing the audience’s reception effect through both audio and visual channels.

#### **4.5 Comprehensive Application of Strategies and the Art of Balance**

In the actual translation process, the above strategies are rarely used alone, and more often, multiple strategies are comprehensively applied and balanced. Excellent translation needs to find the optimal balance among multiple dimensions: the balance between faithfulness and creativity, the balance between cultural preservation and adaptability, the balance between children’s comprehensibility and adults’ aesthetic needs, and the balance between immediate effect and long-term value, so as to maximize the effect of cross-cultural communication[12].

The translation of the theme song “Let It Go” from *Frozen* is a model case of comprehensive strategy application. The title “Let It Go” itself has multiple possible interpretations: letting go of obsessions, releasing oneself, letting nature take its course. The final Chinese translation “随它吧 (suí tā ba)” reflects multiple considerations: linguistically, “随它吧 (suí tā ba)” is a natural spoken Chinese expression; rhythmically, the three characters match the melody tempo; culturally, the concepts of “随缘 (suí yuán)” and “随心 (suí xīn)” already exist in Chinese culture, which are easy to resonate with; functionally, it not only expresses the literal meaning of giving up control but also implies the deep theme of accepting oneself. The translation of the song lyrics flexibly uses various translation strategies: sometimes literal translation is used to preserve the image (e.g., “The cold never bothered me anyway” is translated as “严寒再不能令我害怕 (yánhán zài bù néng lìng wǒ hàipà)"); sometimes free translation is used to convey emotions (e.g., “And one thought crystallizes Like an icy blast” is translated as “心绪所致，冰晶绽放，宛若晶莹冰花 (xīn xù suǒ zhì, bīngjīng zhànfàng, wǎnruò jīngyíng bīnghuā)"); sometimes the structure is adjusted to adapt to the melody (e.g., “To test the limits and break through” is translated as “打破极限，尽情创造 (dǎpò jíxiàn, jìnqíng chuàngzào)”). The final result is a classic translated work that is not only faithful to the spirit of the original but also conforms to Chinese singing habits, achieving remarkable cross-cultural communication effects.

Strategy balance also needs to consider the overall style of the film and the target audience[13]. As a social satire comedy, *Zootopia* can more boldly use contemporary buzzwords and social cultural references in translation; as a philosophical reflection work, *Soul* requires a more implicit and literary language style in translation, avoiding overly slangy expressions that would damage the contemplative atmosphere. This stylistic sensitivity is a hallmark of professional translation teams, which helps to maintain the consistency of the film’s cultural expression in cross-cultural communication.

In the analysis of the comprehensive application of strategies and the art of balance in subtitle translation, it can be pointed out that the title translation of *Inside Out* reflects the systematic coupling and artistic balance of multiple subtitle translation strategies under strict temporal and spatial constraints. Through the cultural substitution strategy, the abstract psychological concept in the original title “Inside Out” is replaced with the concrete cultural image of “特工队 (tègōng duì)”. At the same time, with the humorous creative reconstruction strategy, the dramatic and interesting tone of the spy genre is cited to stylistically translate the core of the film. In addition, the translation process implements the information optimization strategy, maximizing the information density within the extremely limited character space of the film title, achieving the unity of the memorability and communication effectiveness of the translated title. This case demonstrates the systematic coupling and artistic balance of multiple subtitle translation strategies under strict temporal and spatial constraints, which is a typical example of balancing function and aesthetics.

*Zootopia 2* reflects the tension between strategy trade-offs and multi-dimensional equivalence. The translation of “carrot” as “小不点儿 (xiǎo bùdiǎnr)” conforms to the norms of colloquial expression and the habits of affectionate address in the target language, but causes the loss of the character symbol relevance, making the character characteristics constructed through the image of “carrot” in the original text lose their cultural reference. If it is retranslated as “小胡萝卜 (xiǎo húluó bei)”, on the basis of colloquial translation, through the combination of sound and meaning, it can not only retain the original image of “carrot” and its relevance to the character but also reconstruct the affectionate expression effect with the common affixes of Chinese nicknames “小 (xiǎo-)” and “贝 (-bei)”. This treatment is more conducive to achieving the strategic balance among cultural characteristic preservation, character

shaping and colloquial style, thereby improving the semantic integrity and cultural adaptability of the translated text within a limited time and space.

Making dynamic trade-offs under multiple constraints and prioritizing the realization of a dominant communicative intention according to the specific context, while other dimensions may be forced to make partial compromises, which reflects the inherent complexity and balance art of subtitle translation as a constrained translation[14]. Taking *Inside Out* as an example, the original line “Just leave me alone” is a key line when the character’s emotions erupt, whose pragmatic function focuses on venting strong emotions. The translation “别烦我 (bié fán wǒ)” is closer to the dramatic expressiveness of the original text in terms of emotional equivalence and tone intensity, but due to the additional imperative negative structure, it deviates to a certain extent from the subtitle conciseness principle, which may affect the information comprehension efficiency within the limited time and space. This case highlights the inter-strategic tension often faced in subtitle translation practice — that is, the difficulty of fully balancing information conciseness, colloquial fluency, and character personality and emotional saturation.

## **5. Conclusion and Implications**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Through the systematic analysis of the subtitles of eight Disney animated films, this study reveals the multi-dimensional strategic system and practical logic of subtitle translation from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. The research findings can be summarized into the following four core propositions: Firstly, the subtitle translation of animated films is a systematic strategic project rather than a collection of scattered techniques, which involves the comprehensive application of cultural adaptation, creative reconstruction, rhythm adjustment and information optimization. Secondly, the essence of subtitle translation strategies is creative cultural adaptation, which aims to reduce cultural discount and promote cross-cultural identity through the effective conversion of cultural symbols and semantic information. Thirdly, successful subtitle translation needs to seek dynamic balance among multiple tensions, including the balance between cultural preservation and adaptation, between faithfulness and creativity, and between different audience demands. Fourthly, animated subtitle translation is developing into an independent translation sub-discipline, which has important practical significance for the cross-cultural communication of global cultural products. Subtitle translation for animated films is an art of balance, a cross-cultural dialogue, and a creative adaptation. The translation practice of Disney’s film series shows that successful subtitles can, within limited time and space, integrate foreign cultural works into the target cultural context naturally through well-designed cultural, linguistic and audience strategies, allowing audiences from different backgrounds to experience the magic of the story. This translation practice not only expands the boundary of possibilities for language conversion but also enriches our understanding of the mechanism of cross-cultural communication.

### **5.2 Practical Implications**

#### **5.2.1 Implications for Translators**

Animation subtitle translators need to balance “cultural adaptation” and “original spirit”, avoid excessive localization leading to cultural distortion, and also prevent literal translation from causing cultural barriers. Translators should have a strong sense of cross-cultural communication, be familiar with the cultural backgrounds of both the source and target languages, and flexibly apply various translation strategies according to the characteristics of the text and audience needs. At the same time, attention should be paid to the standardization and consistency of translation to ensure the continuity of audience cognition in cross-cultural communication.

### 5.2.2 Implications for Cultural Industry

The localization of global cultural products such as animation and film and television should adopt a “hierarchical strategy” to take into account the needs of audiences of different ages and cultural backgrounds and improve the efficiency of cross-cultural communication. In the process of product dissemination, sufficient attention should be paid to the role of subtitle translation, and professional translation teams should be organized to carry out systematic translation work. At the same time, the effect of subtitle translation should be tracked and evaluated to continuously optimize the translation strategy and enhance the market acceptance of cultural products in different regions.

### 5.2.3 Implications for Cross-Cultural Governance

Subtitle translation can be used as a “tool for enhancing cultural soft power”. Relevant institutions should attach importance to the cross-cultural adaptation of translation in cultural exchange policies, formulate relevant translation norms and guidelines, and reduce cultural discount in cross-cultural communication. By promoting excellent subtitle translation, we can strengthen the mutual understanding and recognition between different cultures, promote the construction of a harmonious global cultural ecology, and realize the positive interaction and common development of global cultures.

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