
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study on English Subtitle Translation from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory: A Case Study of the Film Hidden Blade

Liang Yang¹ and Dan Qin²✉

¹²*Youjiang Medical University for Nationalities, Baise, China*

Corresponding Author: Dan Qin, **E-mail:** 18862233120@163.com

| ABSTRACT

This paper explores the application of Eugene Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory in the English subtitle translation of the Chinese film *Hidden Blade* (2023). By analyzing specific translation strategies and challenges, the study aims to evaluate how functional equivalence theory enhances cross-cultural communication and audience comprehension. Through qualitative analysis of selected dialogue excerpts, the research identifies key practices in achieving lexical, syntactic, textual, and stylistic equivalence. The findings reveal that adaptations in cultural references, sentence restructuring and pragmatic adjustments are critical to preserving the original intent and emotional resonance of the film. This study contributes to the discourse on audiovisual translation by emphasizing the balance between fidelity to source content and adaptability to target-language norms.

| KEYWORDS

Functional equivalence theory; subtitle translation; cross-cultural communication; *Hidden Blade*

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 March 2025

PUBLISHED: 21 March 2025

DOI: 10.32996/ijels.2025.7.1.8

1. Introduction

Subtitle translation plays a significant role in helping intercultural communication, allowing people from different cultural backgrounds to engage with and appreciate Chinese cinema and other cultural offerings. Through subtitles, foreign audiences can grasp the dialogue, plot, and character development in films, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of Chinese cultural values. Against the backdrop of globalization, international cultural competition is increasingly fierce. Subtitle translation has become an essential tool for promoting Chinese culture worldwide. By delivering accurate and high-quality subtitle translations, Chinese films can effectively highlight the distinctive charm and rich depth of Chinese culture, capturing the attention and admiration of a broader international audience. Thus, proper subtitle translation enhances the global influence of Chinese culture, opening up more chances for the international dissemination and exchange of Chinese cultural expressions.

The definitions of subtitle translation among foreign scholars are not unified. According to Henrik Gottlieb (2004, p.86), the authority on subtitle translation theory in the 20th century, subtitle translation can be defined as the rendering in a different language of verbal message in filmic media, in the shape of one or more lines of written text, presented on the screen in synch with the original verbal message. He proposes that subtitle translation is influenced by formal constraints and multimedia constraints. Formal constraints consists of screen size and audience reading speed. Multimedia constraints include the characteristics of cinematic language. These viewpoints have a profound impact on subsequent research in subtitle translation. In *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, subtitling is a term used to refer to one of the two main methods of language transfer used in translating types of mass audio-visual communication such as film and television. First used in 1929, subtitling can be defined as the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue. (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 2014, p.161) Diaz-Clitas and Remael (2007, p.9) further define subtitling as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive

elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off). Chinese scholar Zhang Chunbai (1998, p.50) states that film and television dramas possess two major characteristics: the immediacy of language and the popularity of film and television language. Based on these characteristics, he summarizes the differences between film and television translation and ordinary literary translation into five aspects, namely limitations on word count, restrictions posed by the actors' movements on screen, the individuality of language, cultural factors in film and television translation and the translation of puns. Qian Shaochang (2000, p.61) believes that to study the characteristics of film and television translation, one must first examine the differences between film and television language and written literary language. He summarizes five characteristics of film and television language: auditory nature, comprehensiveness, immediacy, popularity, and the lack of annotation. According to Li Yunxing (2001, p.38), to better present scenes to the audience during translation, it is essential to paying attention to the textual aspect, namely the handling of subtitles.

The film *Hidden Blade* is written and directed by Cheng Er, starring Wang Yibo and Tony Leung Chiu-wai. The movie depicts the story of the members of the underground CPC who, after the outbreak of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese aggression, risked their lives to deliver intelligence and safeguarded their motherland with their lives and blood. Through the intricate and perilous clandestine front, the film showcases the dedication and sacrifice of these unnamed heroes, paying tribute to them.

Hidden Blade is full of historical and cultural significance. However, the inherent limitations of subtitle translation including time constraints, spatial limitations, and cultural differences pose unique challenges in conveying its profound historical and cultural depth. Eugene Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory prioritizes the target audience's understanding over rigid literal accuracy and provides a valuable framework for guiding subtitle translation. This study examines the English subtitles of *Hidden Blade*, exploring how functional equivalence can bridge linguistic and cultural gaps in translation.

2. Literature Review

This section explores the evolution and practical application of Functional Equivalence Theory, along with relevant research in the field of subtitle translation. It highlights key findings that demonstrate how the theory enhances cross-cultural communication and improves audience understanding in the realm of subtitle translation.

Functional Equivalence Theory (Nida, 1969) was first proposed by Eugene A. Nida. The theory emphasizes that translation should not strive for literal correspondence but should aim for functional equivalence between the source language and target language. Li Changshuan (2008, p.22) holds the view that Bible translation expert Eugene A. Nida introduced the concept of "dynamic equivalence" as a criterion for translation in his book *Toward a Science of Translating*. Given that "dynamic equivalence" is often misunderstood, he later changed it to "functional equivalence" in his book *Language, Culture, and Translation*. The term "functional equivalence" (or "dynamic equivalence") refers to the idea that translation should not be constrained by the grammatical structure and literal meaning of the original text, but should instead focus on the response of the target audience, ensuring they have a similar psychological experience as the original audience when reading and appreciating the text. This requires the translation to be as consistent as possible with the original text in terms of lexical meaning, stylistic features, and other aspects, making the translation the closest natural equivalent of the original.

Since 1979, Chinese academia has initiated the introduction of Eugene Nida and his translation theory of "equivalence." Systematic literature dedicated to his translation theories began to emerge in 1981, marking a significant phase in the study of translation studies in China. In 1981, Lin Shuwu from Peking University published an article titled *An Introduction to Nida's Translation Theory* to introduce Nida's book *Toward a Science of Translating*. The article broadly outlined the content and development of Nida's translation theory, as well as his viewpoints and attitudes towards the theory of functional equivalence. From then on, Nida's theory of functional equivalence entered the purview of Chinese scholars and translators, laying the foundation for the subsequent promotion and citation of the theory in China. Shortly thereafter, the renowned scholar and translator Tan Zaixi conducted a more in-depth and detailed analysis on the theory of equivalence in his book *Translation Studies*. He stated that Nida considers dynamic equivalence superior to formal equivalence, emphasizing the importance of the reader's perspective rather than the structural form of the translation. This perspective introduced Nida's advocacy for a reader-centered approach to translation, bringing it to wider attention.

According to Nida (1993, p.27), functional equivalence involves "Maximal equivalence" and "Minimal equivalence". At its highest level, functional equivalence aims to ensure that the audience of a translated work can interpret and value it in a way nearly identical to that the original audience perceived. At its most basic level, functional equivalence requires that the translated text be comprehensible enough for its readers to grasp how the original audience likely understood and appreciated the source material.

The Theory of Functional Equivalence encompasses equivalence at the linguistic, cultural, and communicative levels. It comprises four key dimensions: lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence, and stylistic equivalence. For equivalence, the most critical element is meaning, followed by form. The form of a text may, at times, obscure its cultural significance and hinder intercultural communication. Lexical Equivalence involves identifying precise equivalents in the target language for terms used in the source language, ensuring that the translated text conveys the intended meaning to its readers. Syntactic Equivalence emphasizes maintaining grammatical consistency between the source and target texts, preserving the original sentence structure and logical flow to enhance comprehension for the target audience. Textual Equivalence ensures that the overall organization and logical coherence of the source text are retained in the translation, allowing the translated version to reflect the same meaning and consistency as the original. Stylistic Equivalence focuses on replicating the stylistic features of the source text, including tone, style, and rhetorical techniques, thereby preserving the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the original work in the translated version.

According to data from CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), the research on functional equivalence theory is mostly in the fields of static texts, while the research on subtitle translation is not enough. Meanwhile, existing studies predominantly analyze films or culturally hybrid works, while there is limited research on modern Chinese films like *Hidden Blade* which features dense cultural and historical subtext. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how functional equivalence can navigate ambiguous narratives and culturally embedded dialogues, particularly in films that blend realism with artistic abstraction. Shao Wei (2009, p. 90) pointed out that subtitle translation itself is also constrained by time and space. When lengthy dialogues in a film are fully translated, viewers may be distracted from enjoying the film as they focus on reading the subtitles. Moreover, excessive subtitles occupy a significant amount of space, potentially covering too much of the imagery, which can interfere with viewers' visual experience and hinder their interpretation of the visuals. Therefore, film subtitle translation demands "appropriate form". Consequently, for relatively long dialogues in films, guided by the theory of functional equivalence, they can be handled through reduction, sacrificing the "form" of the source language to convey the meaning and spirit of the original dialogue. Liang Shuang (2012, p.141) argued that in terms of the film itself, the application of functional equivalence in film subtitle translation is highly necessary. Each individual and each language possesses its own cultural style, making absolute communication between them impossible. Therefore, film translators face a dilemma: film subtitle translation demands complete equivalence, yet absolute equivalence is difficult to achieve. Based on communication theory and the characteristics of cinematic art, Nida's functional equivalence theory helps to resolve this contradiction.

In conclusion, prior research has already laid a solid foundation for deeper research in subtitle translation. Functional Equivalence Theory has emerged as a pivotal instrument in translation studies, underscoring its broad applicability and success both domestically and internationally. Against the backdrop of Chinese culture "going global", this paper endeavors to examine the linguistic characteristics of Chinese film *Hidden Blade* and the application of Functional Equivalence Theory in the subtitle translation.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is rooted in Functional Equivalence Theory and provides a comprehensive approach to analyze English subtitle translation in the film *Hidden Blade*. By applying the core principles of this theory, this study aims to contribute to the understanding and improvement of subtitle translation practices within the film industry.

Guided by the theoretical framework of Functional Equivalence Theory and to address the identified research gap, this study focuses on the following two central research questions:

1. What are the linguistic characteristics of the Chinese film *Hidden Blade*?
2. How does Functional Equivalence Theory apply to the C-E translation of *Hidden Blade*?

4. Methods

This paper employs a qualitative approach, analyzing seventeen selected dialogue excerpts from *Hidden Blade*'s English subtitle. These samples are purposefully selected to represent typical characteristics such as sentences with historical events, four-character idioms as well as sentences with metaphors. They will be discussed from four aspects, namely, lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence and stylistic equivalence.

This methodological framework facilitates a systematic examination of linguistic features and the strategic approaches utilized to mitigate challenges arising from cultural-linguistic disparities, underpinned by the principles of Functional Equivalence Theory. It also elucidates the translator's role as a strategic mediator who balances source-text fidelity with target-oriented adaptations, a process critical to aligning translations with the socio-cultural expectations of the audience. Such alignment not only enhances cross-cultural communication efficacy but also extends its impact to more research on subtitle translation of films embedded with cultural and historical elements.

5. Results and Discussion

This part explores the practical application of Functional equivalence theory in the subtitle translation of *Hidden Blade*, concentrating on four key aspects: lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence and stylistic equivalence. These core principles act as a framework for translators to adapt the content, ensuring it meets the specific linguistic and cultural expectations of the intended audience.

5.1 Lexical equivalence

Lexical Equivalence in translation means the critical process of identifying linguistically appropriate counterparts between source language and target language in order to preserve semantic integrity. This foundational concept in cross-linguistic communication makes sure that the target audience can receive fidelity to the lexical of original text's .

5.1.1 Idioms with metaphor

Idioms, as a unique linguistic form in Chinese, often contain rich cultural connotations and historical backgrounds. When translating them into English, these cultural elements may be difficult to correspond directly to English expressions, which will increase the translation difficulty. This is especially true for metaphorical idioms, as they are often based on specific cultural backgrounds and contexts and convey abstract or complex concepts through metaphorical techniques. Metaphorical idioms typically include implicit elements, using a concrete object or situation to metaphorically represent another abstract or complex object or situation. When translating into English, it is necessary to accurately capture this metaphorical relationship and find English expressions that can convey the same or similar metaphorical meanings. Furthermore, since idioms are usually concise and compact and convey rich information within a limited number of words, it is important to maintain this conciseness while ensuring the accuracy of the translation.

Example 1

Chinese version : 帝国海军在太平洋继续势如破竹。

English version: The Imperial Navy continues to **dominate** the Pacific.

The expression “势如破竹” originates from *The Biography of Du Yu in the Book of Jin*. Its original meaning is to describe a situation like splitting bamboo: once a few sections are cut, the rest will split open along the momentum of the blade, used to depict achieving victory at every step without any obstacles. Therefore, this idiom emphasizes smooth, rapid and unstoppable progress or victory. Natural metaphors in Chinese idioms (such as bamboo splitting), as linguistic devices that draw upon elements from the natural world to convey abstract concepts or complex ideas, may not have direct counterparts in English, and a literal translation may confuse readers. Here, “dominate” is chosen to ensure the effectiveness of information transmission, rather than causing comprehension difficulties through a literal translation. The word “dominate” in English means “to have control over” or “to be the most important”, that is, to exercise dominance and occupy a predominant position. In this English translation, the metaphor is abandoned, and the concise verb “dominate” is used to directly convey the sense of control, ensuring efficient transmission of the information.

Example 2

Chinese version: 为什么 弃暗投明？

English version: Why did you **change sides**?

The idiom “弃暗投明” means to leave behind darkness and seek out the light, metaphorically referring to leaving behind unjust and dark forces to embark on a righteous and bright path. This idiom was said by Director He to Mr. Zhang. On the surface, Director He was the director of the Political Protection Department of the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime, but in reality, he was an undercover agent of the Communist Party of China. Mr. Zhang was originally a member of the Communist Party of China, but due to the prolonged stress of underground work, his mental state gradually collapsed, leading to his eventual betrayal of CPC and allegiance to the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime, where he betrayed his colleagues and the secrets of the Communist Party of China. The background of this statement is that after Mr. Zhang betrayed the Communist Party and came to seek refuge with the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime, Director He was responsible for receiving him. Since Director He's overt identity was an officer of the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime, he suggested that Mr. Zhang's decision to abandon the Communist Party and join the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime was a choice to “abandon darkness and embrace the light”. However, this was actually a sarcasm aimed at mocking Mr. Zhang's betrayal because of his choice was shameful and incorrect , so “change sides” is enough to simply express the meaning.

5.1.2 Identity words

"Identity terms" in Chinese refer specifically to a category of vocabulary used to describe the identity characteristics of individuals or groups. Here, "identity" refers to the roles, statuses or traits that a person possesses in various aspects such as society, culture, occupation and family. In *Hidden Blade*, due to its rich historical background and profound cultural connotations, numerous identity terms appear.

Example 3:

Chinese version: 《无名》

English version: *Hidden Blade*

The title of this film did not adopt a literal translation but used creative translation, highlighting its cultural connotation and theme. "Hidden Blade" can be extended to mean "The Lurker". In the film, it does not refer to a specific character, but rather to "nameless heroes" who makes great contributions to the revolution. This translation perfectly aligns with the film's theme, which focuses on individuals who remain unknown yet make tremendous sacrifices for their country and nation. At the same time, the translation "*Hidden Blade*" retains the suspense of the film. As the plot unfolds, viewers gradually uncover each mystery, only realizing at the end the tragic heroism of each "lurker", who faces death with resolve. This translation complements the film's narrative style, keeping viewers on edge and anticipating throughout the viewing experience.

Example 4

Chinese version: 交通员姓陈。

English version: **The underground messenger** is a Chen.

In this film, the term "交通员" is not the personnel responsible for managing public transportation systems, but refers to the individuals during the War of Resistance period who obtained secret message for the organization and secretly conveyed important information. Their work was often secretive, hence the need for the term "underground" to describe their working environment.

Example 5

Chinese version: 不要对汪先生的事业有误解

English version: Make no mistake about **President Wang's** endeavors.

In this context, "汪先生" refers to Wang Jingwei. Wang Jingwei betrayed his country and nation by aligning himself with Japan during the War of Resistance against Japan and established a puppet regime supported by Japan. The Chinese term "汪先生" is a neutral term of respect but in reality serves as a political deification symbol within the puppet regime for Wang Jingwei. The Wang Puppet Government modeled itself after the presidential system of the West. Although its regime was self-proclaimed and not recognized by the international community, the language used would inevitably follow the discourse system within the puppet regime, expressing respect for Wang Jingwei and recognition of the Wang Puppet Government. To recreate the perspective of the puppet regime, "汪先生" here should be translated as "President Wang."

5.2 Syntactic Equivalence

Syntactic equivalence involves maintaining consistency in grammatical structure between the source text and the target language. It ensures that the sentence structure and logical flow of the original should be retained in the target language in order to help comprehension for readers of the target language.

5.2.1 The handling of tense

In English, tense serves as a grammatical marker to signify the timing of an action or the existence of a state. However, Chinese lacks the explicit morphological changes in verbs and relies on temporal adverbs, contextual cues or the inherent meaning of verbs to convey the timing of actions. Whether referring to which tense, Chinese verbs remain unchanged in form, unlike English verbs, which undergo specific morphological alterations. In contrast, English has multiple tenses and explicitly marks tense through verb inflections and the use of auxiliary verbs to specify temporal relationships.

Example 6

Chinese version: 我来帮你填。

English version: I'll fill that in for you.

This sentence was spoken by Director He to Mr. Zhang. Director He needed to obtain some basic information from Mr. Zhang and assist him in filling out a form. Chinese does not explicitly express tense through verb morphology, but native speakers of the source language can easily understand that this sentence implies the future tense. That is, Director He intends to help Mr. Zhang fill in the relevant information later. Through the word “来”, native speakers can clearly perceive an impending action or intention, similar to the future tense in English. In the English sentence, “I'll” is the contraction of “I will,” clearly expressing the future tense. With the help of the auxiliary verb “will”, the English sentence explicitly indicates the future tense. Meanwhile, the verb “fill” remains in its infinitive form, but in this structure, it denotes an action that will take place in the future.

Example 7

Chinese version: 我是机要员。

English version: I was the Confidential Secretary.

The person who said this sentence is Mr. Zhang. He used to be an underground member of the Communist Party of China. Due to the long-term covert work, he could no longer bear the pressure and betrayed the Party and sought refuge with the Wang Puppet Regime. Director He was responsible for receiving him. By the time he approached Director He, he was no longer a confidential secretary of the Communist Party of China. Chinese does not explicitly express tense through verb morphology, but this sentence implies Mr. Zhang's past identity as a confidential secretary. Therefore, in English, it is necessary to clearly use the past tense (“was”) to indicate that Mr. Zhang's identity as a confidential secretary belonged to the past, which also demonstrates his determination to be a betrayer.

5.2.2 Explicit conditional words and subjects

The structure of Chinese sentences is relatively loose, often relying on context and logical relationships for connection, rather than depending on grammatical forms. In contrast, English sentence structure is rigorous, relying on grammatical forms (such as conjunctions, tenses and voices) to express logical relationships. In Chinese sentences, the subject is frequently omitted based on context, especially in spoken language. In English sentences, however, a subject is mandatory, even if it is a non-substantive word like “it” or “there”.

Example 8

Chinese version: 还是我过来了解情况比较好。

English version: I think it'd be better if I come instead.

In the original text, the condition and subject are implied through modal particles and context. In English, the explicit expression of conditional sentences requires making the subject explicit and clarifying the conditional relationship. The implied subject in the original text is “I”, so the subject needs to be explicitly stated as “I” in the translation, which aligns with the principles of English grammar. The original text implies a conditional conjunction, so the conditional conjunction “if” needs to be explicitly added in the translation, conforming to the explicit expression habits of conditional sentences in English.

Example 9

Chinese version: 我不安插人，你们能抓到国民党的站长吗？

English version: If it's not my information, you really think you could capture Kuomintang's chief of station?

The original Chinese sentence is a complex sentence consisting of two clauses separated by a comma, with no explicit connecting word. However, through context and logical sequence, it can be understood that the implied connecting word is “if”. In English, the conditional relationship needs to be clearly expressed, using “if” as the introductory word for the conditional clause. To conform to English grammatical rules, appropriate adjustments to the logical order and context of the Chinese sentence are also necessary in the translation.

5.3 Textual equivalence

Textual equivalence entails maintaining the overall structure and logical coherence of the original text in the translation. This guarantees that, when considered as a whole, the translated text communicates the same meaning and retains the same degree of coherence as its source text.

5.3.1 Situational equivalence

Situational equivalence refers to ensuring that the target language text accurately and appropriately reflects and adapts to the specific situational context of the source language text during the translation process. This equivalence not only focuses on the direct linguistic transformation but, more importantly, requires a deep understanding and reproduction of the situational context in the source text, including communication settings, communicative purposes, modes of communication and relevant socio-cultural backgrounds. Ignoring the situational context may lead to misunderstandings or inaccurate conveyance of information, thereby affecting readers' understanding and perception of the source text.

Example 10

Chinese version: 他登陆扬子江的时候已经是冬天，正好赶上南京。

English version: It was winter when he landed on Yangtze River. The Nanjing massacre happened.

“南京” in the original sentence refers to a city. However, it is also the place where the Nanjing Massacre took place. In this context, it is not merely a geographical term but also carries specific historical significance. The phrase “正好赶上南京” actually implies that the timing of his landing coincides with the historical event of the Nanjing Massacre. When translating the word “南京”, it is necessary to convey its implied social background at that time and translate it as “the Nanjing Massacre”.

Example 11

Chinese version: 上海也好, 南京也好, 武汉也好。

English version: Chiang had been in Shanghai, in Nanjing, and in Wuhan.

In the context of this sentence, “Shanghai”, “Nanjing” and “Wuhan” are more than geographical locations. They are used to indicate that regardless of whether Mr. Chiang was in Shanghai, Nanjing or Wuhan, he didn't care the safety and well-being of the people. When translating, it is necessary to add the true subject “Mr. Chiang” and use the correct tense.

5.3.2 Contextual equivalence

Contextual equivalence refers to ensuring that, in the process of translation, the target text accurately and appropriately reflects and adapts to the specific contextual environment of the source text, thereby maintaining consistency and equivalence between the source and target texts at the contextual level.

Example 12

Chinese version: 老板哀求吉川不要碰他们的女儿

English version: They begged the soldiers not to lay a finger on the girls.

Here, Captain Wang from the Political Protection Department of the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime is sharing harrowing and outrageous story with Mr. Ye. Yoshikawa, along with another six fellow soldiers, raped the two daughters of a gold shop owner. Based on the prior context, it is known that Yoshikawa was operating in conjunction with six fellow Japanese soldiers. Therefore, it can be inferred that the boss was not just pleading with Yoshikawa alone, but with Yoshikawa and those Japanese soldiers as well. Hence, in this context, “吉川” should be translated as “the soldiers” to reflect this collective action.

Example 13

Chinese version: 你说人家是黑店。

English version: Don't rush to conclusions.

“黑店” refers to those restaurants that offer poor service, charge exorbitant prices, and engage in deceptive practices. There isn't a direct English equivalent that encapsulates all the meanings of “黑店”. Based on the context, this particular restaurant isn't truly

a shady one. Mr. Ye called it a shady restaurant because he felt the portions were too small. However, from what Captain Wang said, we know that this is a breakfast diner, and he only ordered one steamed rib portion, which by nature is small, so it can't be classified as a shady restaurant. Therefore, Captain Wang believes that Mr. Ye's conclusion about it being a shady restaurant is unreasonable and that he jumped to conclusions too soon. The translation "Don't rush to conclusions", emphasizes the importance of not hastily making negative judgments.

5.4 Stylistic equivalence

Stylistic equivalence involves maintaining the stylistic features of the original text within the translated text. This ensures that the translation retains the same level of style, tone and rhetorical elements as the source text, preserving the overall aesthetic appeal and expressive richness of the original.

5.4.1 Retention of emotional tone

In the process of translation, retaining emotional tone entails capturing and preserving the specific moods and feelings embedded in the original text, ensuring that the translation resonates with the original in terms of emotional impact and depth. This necessitates a profound understanding of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of both the source and target languages, as well as a keen and nuanced handling of the unique emotional subtleties that are peculiar to the source text.

Example 14

Chinese version: 你快点去死了吧。

English version: Just die already.

This statement was made by Miss Fang, Mr. Ye's fiancée. She, ostensibly a dancer, was actually a member of the Shanghai Underground Anti-Traitor Squad of the Communist Party, and she harbored a deep hatred for traitors. Unbeknownst to her, Mr. Ye's true identity was also an underground Communist. Due to his superficial identity as someone affiliated with the Wang Puppet Government, she mistakenly identified him as a traitor. The original statement employed a very direct expression, devoid of any modification or euphemism, directly conveying the desire for the other person's death. When translating it, it is important to retain the directness and imperative tone of the original sentence, allowing English readers to perceive a similar emotional intensity as in the Chinese original. "Just die already" is laden with offensiveness and aggression, aligning perfectly with the emotional tone of the original.

Example 15

Chinese version: 你的人是饭桶吗?

English version: Do your people have shit for brains?

This sentence is said by Minister Tang. He mocks the incompetence of the agents under the head of the Shanghai espionage ring because his men were yesterday throat-slitted by one of them yesterday. Minister Tang is the head of the Political Protection Department of the Wang Jingwei Puppet Regime and kindly belongs to the same camp as the head of the Shanghai espionage ring, so Minister Tang was angry about the situation. In Chinese, "饭桶" carries a strong sarcastic tone, which reflects Minister Tang's anger. In translation, it is essential to use straightforward words to retain the same emotional color and express dissatisfaction and sarcasm. "Have shit for brains" successfully captures and conveys the emotional tone and sarcastic implication of the original sentence.

5.4.2 Equivalence in rhetorical devices

The accurate translation of rhetorical devices plays a critical role in both translation practices and linguistic expression. It not only guarantees the precise transmission of source language content into the target language but also retains the distinctive stylistic and rhetorical features of the original text. This is essential for upholding the text's overall integrity and ensuring a satisfying reading experience for the audience. Achieving equivalence in rhetorical devices is a key component of intercultural communication. By employing appropriate translation techniques, cultural obstacles can be bridged, fostering mutual understanding and interaction among diverse cultures.

Example 16

Chinese version: 如果他有意放我一条生路，并不需要我去求他。如果他已决定要枪毙我，求他也没用，反而凭空丧失尊严。

English version: If he wanted me to live, I would never have to beg him. If he wanted me to die, then there's no point begging, no point throwing my dignity out of the window.

In this Chinese sentence, it uses contrasting technique. During translation, preserving contrast enables readers to instantly grasp the tense atmosphere and emotional conflict conveyed by the original text. "Then there's no point begging" aligns closely with the original in tone and expressive effect. Such a translation approach undoubtedly deepens readers' understanding and attitudes expressed in the original text.

Example 17

Chinese version: 剩下几个人七嘴八舌。

English version: Rumors are flying around.

"七嘴八舌", which metonymically refers to "multiple people speaking chaos," vividly portrays a scene of confusion and cacophony, exaggeratedly depicting a state of numerous voices intermingling and enhancing the expressive power of language, providing readers with an intuitive visual image. There is no direct equivalent in English, so the translation employs personification and metaphor. By personifying "rumors", the translation uses "flying around" to describe the dynamic spread of rumors, giving them a sense of life. Additionally, "flying around" metaphorically represents the rapid dissemination of rumors, graphically illustrating the expansion of information.

6. Conclusion

The application of Functional Equivalence Theory in translating the film subtitle of *Hidden Blade* from Chinese to English provides valuable insights into how translation practices can be harmonized with the cultural and aesthetic tastes of the intended audience. The dialogue in the film *Hidden Blade* is seamlessly integrated with its historical background, being concise yet profound and rich in metaphor and symbolism. Lexical equivalence, syntactic equivalence, textual equivalence and stylistic equivalence are considered in the process of translation.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Eugene A. Nida & Charles R. Taber (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- [2] Eugene A. Nida *Language, Culture, and Translating*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- [3] Gottlieb H. (2004). *Language-political Implications of Subtitling*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.56.11.got>
- [4] Jorge Diaz-Clitas & Aline Remael (2007). *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*. London: Routledge <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315759678>
- [5] Liang Shuang (2012). Research on the Application of Functional Equivalence Theory in Film Subtitle Translation. *Foreign Economic & Trade* (09), 140-142.
- [6] Li Changshuan (2008). *Theory and Practice of Non-Literary Translation* Beijing: China Translation Corporation
- [7] Li Yunxing (2001). Strategies for Subtitle Translation. *Chinese Translators Journal*. (04), 38-40.
- [8] Mark Shuttleworth & Moria Cowie (2014). *Dictionary of Translation Studies*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760490>
- [9] Qian Shaochang (2000). Film and Television Translation: An Increasingly Important Area in the Realm of Translation. *Chinese Translators Journal*. (01), 61-65.
- [10] Shao Wei (2009). The Implications of Functional Equivalence Theory for Film Subtitle Translation. *Journal of Xi'an International Studies University*. (02), 89-91.
- [11] Zhang Chunbai (1998). An Initial Exploration of Film and Television Translation. *Chinese Translators Journal*. (02), 50-53.