
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Evolution of China's Film Translation History through the Perspective of Sociological Imagination

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ABSTRACT

Film translation has experienced a long history in China. In 1949, the film *Private Aleksandr Matrosov* was the first film to be imported and translated into Chinese from the former Soviet Union. This history continues into the contemporary era where China has become one of the biggest and most prosperous film markets globally; hundreds of international movies are imported to compete at the office box and for market shares. The functions, aesthetic standards, and values of film translation, including dubbing and subtitles, meanwhile, have changed along with different historical periods. This paper aims to answer the question of how the film translation has evolved along with time? What are the main reasons? An approach of literature search and discourse analysis will be used to explore the topic through the perspective of Mills' sociological imagination theory. The main findings are displayed that the social environment, including the social priorities, market requisition, and population, would affect the film translation industry.

KEYWORDS

Film translation, dubbing, subtitles, sociological imagination

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

Film translation has an extended history in China, experiencing various periods and developments. Chinese audiences' tastes and the modes of dubbing or subtitles vary according to these different periods. Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, movies from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have been imported on a large scale into China to be translated by Changchun Film Studio and Shanghai Film Studio to encourage people's high morale (Ma: 2017). After ten years (1966-1976) of cultural revolution when foreign movies and the amount of translated works declined rapidly, China welcomed a brand-new era of dubbed films to gain access to exotic cultures and customs. With the advent of the internet, modes of communication were revolutionized, and borders, features, and functions of interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication have been changing. Based on this, people asserted that dubbed films would no longer be popular. Here, it seems the research tradition on film dubbing translation in China has no future as more research focuses on tracing the history, analyzing film translation in terms of its communication angle, or simply devoting research to the internet fan-sub phenomenon.

The most important contribution of this research into the rises and declines of the dubbing translation industry in China lies in exploring this from a sociological angle to illustrate where it might go in the near future. Further, there is value in discussing diverse social elements that contribute to the phenomenon. This paper adopts the case study method by analyzing dubbed films and subtitled ones from different eras and examining the linkages between film translation evolution and the social environment to illuminate the potential power of film translation in China and pursue its future orientation.

2. Literature review

2.1 Translation History

Most of the published studies on this topic focus on descriptive writing by tracing the long history of China's film translation industry, targeting a certain historical period to explore how dubbing translation ended. Li (2010) named the period from 1949–1966 "Seventeen Years of movie translation," a space in history during which China's dubbing translation evolved from amateur to professional; thus, this period stands as unquestionably meaningful in translation history research. Some scholars focus on more contemporary times where the internet is widely used and affects the dubbing translation industry. Here, various research angles are adopted, such as China's film market, American exported films, subtitles VS dubbing, technological progress, artistic value, and so on (Ma & Ou, 2016). Also, China's film translation history is inextricably linked to Changchun Film Studio, the major dubbing company from the earliest time (Zhang, 2009). Professor Jin Haina provides a brief historical overview of the translation of Chinese films and explores how film translation facilitates the dissemination of Chinese films (Jin, 2018).

While the situation and problems facing this industry have been frequently studied, few reflections have been made from a sociological angle. After World War II, the world was linked unprecedentedly even though conflicts and disputes had occurred frequently before this time. No matter the person, occupation, or field of economy, culture, or politics, as presented in this paper, social environments should be considered as a factor generally affecting all categories of society. This is the context of this paper; it analyzes film translation from the angle of sociological imagination.

2.2 Sociological Imagination Perspective

The term "Sociological Imagination" was coined by Wright Mills, an American sociologist, and famous culture critic. Sociological imagination, as Mills (1970) proposed it, comprises "vivid awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society" (p. 5). Even though Mills' proposition was satirized by other renowned sociologists because he did not fully devote himself to academics (rather focusing on politics), sociological imagination suggests that social structures determine personal circumstances. Furthermore, without this perspective or, as he named it, imagination, sociological research would pay too much attention to magnitude and empiricism.

The value of sociology, Mills contended, lies in its capacity to make connections between what he called "personal troubles" and "public issues" (Shani, 2020). When this point of view is applied in the field of movie dubbing translation, historical structures and social forces are bound to be major influences, even more, influential than elements within the occupation itself. Sociological imagination serves as a critical lens that can raise sociological awareness (Rousseau, 2020), considering different stages of movie dubbing translation along with their corresponding social environments. Taking the rises and falls of China's dubbing translation as a research object, the angles of linguistics and communication are neither sufficient nor convincing as they neglect social influencing factors.

According to Doctor Ma Zhengqi, a distinguished linguist and western literature scholar in China, film translation is essentially and literally rhetoric reconstruction which involves topic reconstruction, dialogue reconstruction, rhythm reconstruction, and even character reconstruction to reach the final goal of effective equivalence as coined by Nida (Ma, 2020; Nida, 1964). This raises the question, what are the societal and academic standards to be speculated and applied to reconstruct? A crucial way to answer this is to gain insight into the sociological imagination.

3. Research Design

The history of film translation could be sliced into four main parts, coherent with social backgrounds (Tan, 2014). This paper employs the case study method, taking three films from these three periods, either dubbed or subtitled, as examples to explore the differences and changes in China's film translation from the angle of sociological imagination to deduce its functions and aesthetic values.

A. Original phase (1949–1976)

The original phase started in 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded. Here, film import and dubbing translation welcomed their first blooming and active development. Due to the world's political situation post-World War II, the number and nationality of movie imports were totally different from before. The globe was divided into different camps, and China sided with the former Soviet Union in all aspects, which subsequently impacted the birth of China's dubbing translation industry. Among all the imported films, those from the former Soviet Union and other socialist countries were top on China's list. During this period, two historically famous film studios, Changchun Film Studio and Shanghai Film Studio were established, and the first dubbed movie from the former Soviet Union was released in China, *Private Aleksandr Matrosov*.

Dubbing translation opened a window for Chinese people to see foreign and exotic films, marking a triumphant start to the new era in Chinese history. Afterward, numerous imported movies from the former Soviet Union were translated and dubbed in Chinese

to be broadcast, such as *Сын Полка (Little Hero)*, *Райнис (The Poet)*, *Тихий Дон (Quiet Don)*, and others. During the noted "Seventeen Years of Movie Translation," China imported 744 foreign movies, 44% of which were from the former Soviet Union (Ma, 2017).

China's early era of dubbing translation was ignited by artworks from the former Soviet Union. In addition to the quality of the films themselves, new professionals also contributed significantly to the industry, such as Yuan Naichen, the director of *Private Aleksandr Matrosov*, and Chen Xuyi, a pioneer of China's film translation industry. Apart from these professional influences, society at that time often controlled where this industry would go and how it would develop.

As the initial few dubbed movies were released, China mainly imported films from the former *Сын Полка (Little Hero)* was set during World War II when an orphan boy, Syn, lost his way and ran into a military camp in the former Soviet Union. After some time hanging around, Syn won the love and care of the soldiers and became a brave little hero set on fighting against the Nazis. The clip selected for analysis is when Syn was being temporarily taken care of by the soldiers, but the captain wanted to send him away.

Characters	Chinese dubbed translation	Literal meaning
Captain	那孩子怎么样啊，他跟你说了些什么？	How is the boy? Did he say anything?
Soldier	事情是这样的上尉同志，他爸爸前线上牺牲了，村子敌人一占领，他妈不肯交出母牛给打死了，奶奶和妹妹是饿死的，剩他一个，就没人管他了，又很幼稚跟个狼一样上尉同志。	Here is the thing Comrade Captain. His dad died in the war as a soldier, while his mom was shot because she refused to give up the cows. Since his grandma and sister died of starvation, he then was left alone, wild like a wolf.
Captain	这么说这个孩子不错啊。	Sounds like a great boy!
Soldier	他真是一个又懂事又机灵的小家伙。	Indeed, he is smart and nice.
Captain	这么吧，送他到后方去。	All right, send him to the back.
Soldier	太可惜了上尉同志。	It's a pity Comrade Captain.
Captain	嗯？怎么可惜，可惜什么？	Why a pity? What's a pity?
Soldier	那后方哪儿？他是个孤儿，一个亲人也没有，说不定会流落的。	Just where in the rear area? He's an orphan with no one to care for him. Probably, he would be lost.
Captain	不会的，后方那儿有收容机关。	Impossible. They have shelter there.
Soldier	嗯，话对的。我们想给你提一下，可不可以把他留在这。	Sure Sir. But we still want to ask if we can keep him here.
Captain	这么想是不行的，我们没有谁付得了这个责任的，他虽然是个小孩，可也是条命啊，出了事情怎么办，再说炮弹是不长眼睛的对吗？	It's not permitted to do so. We are not able to take care of him. Life matters even though he's a kid. What if he runs into danger? The bullet won't have mercy.
Soldier	是，上尉同志，那	Yes sir! If...
Captain	哎不不不，他打仗还小，先得学习，一有车就送他到后方去。	No, no, no. He is too young to be a soldier. He needs to study first. Send him to the rear area as soon as possible.
Soldier	上尉同志，但	Yes sir! But...
Captain	就这么办。	Do as I said.

Table 1
Dialogue and Translation from *Сын Полка*

The central topic of a certain clip is usually encompassed by a more general topic. Ensuring the topic of one clip helps to translate the scripts without straying from the point. In this clip (Table 1), the topic lies in the soldiers' obligation to "report to the captain," where the soldier must report the whole situation to the captain to let the captain decide whether to keep the boy or send him away. Under this topic, the translation is supposed to conform to what "reporting to the leader" sounds like. After confirming the topic, characters should be designed or reconstructed by what the person has said (Ma, 2020). In the dialogue, the soldier reports to and obeys the captain without a doubt since the standard army procedure is that military orders always come first. Careful, polite, and even submissive is what the translation aims to be. For example: "事情是这样的上尉同志" (literal meaning: Here is the

thing, Comrade Captain) or “我们想给你提一下，可不可以把他留在这。” (literal meaning: But we still want to ask if we can keep him here). The soldier says “Comrade Captain” and “sir” at the beginning of each sentence, maintaining respect in consulting his leader’s opinion; this shares the status of these two men. Additionally, the captain is the leader of their camp and thus has control over everything, including Syn’s destiny. As a result, what he asks, says, or commands is constantly strong and determined so that no one would ever disobey him. For example: “这么吧，送他到后方去。” (literal meaning: All right, send him to the rear area), “这么想是不行的，我们没有谁付得了这个责任的。” (literal meaning: It’s not permitted to do so. We are not able to take care of him), and “就这么办。” (literal meaning: Do as I said).

The imported films from the former Soviet Union were meant to circulate revolutionary spirit, enhance diplomatic friendship, and inspire people’s confidence in China. Dubbing film was more than a personal taste or career; it acted with a public agenda, and translated movies flourished due to social settings and intentions. Thus, it is unwise to research early dubbing translation without examining society at the time.

B. Developing phase (1977–1993)

The period from 1977 to 1993 is officially the golden age of translated dubbed films. The overall number of dubbed films reached 559, covering 44 countries across the globe; 49% of them were from developed countries such as the United States, Japan, France, and England (Ma, 2017).

Multiple outstanding dubbed films were introduced to Chinese people creating a memorable age of dubbing translation. Well-known works such as *Zorro*, *La Grande Vadrouille*, *Yesenia*, *The Cassandra Crossing*, *Sissi*, and others were released during this time, becoming artistic flags of culture and art.

Dubbed films from this developing phase were more concerned with artistic pleasure and literal value instead of political functions or propaganda. During the 1980s, China and its people urgently required approaches and resources that shared knowledge of the outside world, and movie dubbing translation showed up as the best artistic way to access this knowledge. Together with China’s Reform and Opening-up policy, the dubbing translation industry played a crucial role in entertaining and illuminating, and imbibing social culture inheritance.

The film *Sissi* was imported into China in 1988. It was dubbed by Shanghai Film Studio when the golden time of movie translation had come to fruition. China was implementing Reform and Opening-up policies across the country and had achieved preliminary successes in this regard. Dubbed films, under the open state policy and loose supervision, were becoming a bridge between Chinese people and foreign cultures. After the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, especially younger viewers were more eager to engage earnestly with foreign countries, cultures, customs, languages, and so on.

The *Sissi* film series consists of three films. This paper focuses on the second, *The Young Empress*, which depicts the period after princess Sissi becomes an empress of Austria. After marrying Franz, the emperor of Austria, Sissi runs into troubles and obstacles while living in the court even though she and the emperor are in love. Sophie the mother of Franz, raises Sissi’s daughter because she thinks Sissi is unable to be a qualified mother. In the selected clip, Sissi’s mother, the Duchess Ludovika, comes to speak with Franz’s mother, Sophie, the queen of Austria, to persuade her to give back Sissi’s daughter and allow Sissi to live freely.

Characters	Chinese dubbed translation	Literal meaning
Sophie	这么说你到维也纳来看我，就为了兴师问罪。	It seems that you came here to blame me instead of visiting me?
Ludovika	不，苏菲，我只是想跟你谈谈，随便谈谈。 我们都是做母亲的。我还记得在我们小时候，姐妹中见你的心最好。对一切都充满仁爱。也许多年的政治生涯使你变得如此冷酷无情。 你把皇位让给弗朗茨是因为你爱他，要让弗朗茨幸福是你的心愿。可正因为如此，你应该让他真正的幸福。弗朗茨爱茜茜，你应该感谢茜茜不是吗？	No, Sophie. I'd like nothing but to talk with you freely. Both of us are mothers. I still remember that you've always been the kindest one in our family when we were young, being merciful to everyone. Maybe years of being a politician have made you ruthless. You resigned for Franz because you love him and what you wish is to see him happy. Upon this, the real happiness is what you wish to see in him. Franz loves

		Sissi. Isn't Sissi who you should be grateful to?
Sophie	我说路德维卡，别以为我不喜欢你的茜茜，她的长处我也不是视而不见，我所以要亲自照顾小苏菲并不是为了和她过不去，因为我觉得茜茜她到现在还像个孩子。	Ludovika dear, don't simply think I didn't like Sissi, that I even ignore her advantages. I didn't mean to confront her by taking care of little Sophie myself. Only, I do think that Sissi herself is just a kid.
Ludovika	可孩子离不开她的母亲。	But the child needs her mother.
Sophie	难道皇后就能离开她的皇帝了吗？为了国家利益，弗朗茨马上要进行一系列国事访问，难道茜茜能不在他身边吗？那样哪儿有时间照看孩子？	And the empress needs her emperor! Franz is taking off to pay state visits right away. Doesn't Sissi need to be by his side? How can she take care of the baby?
Ludovika	对是对，难道就没别的方法二者兼顾吗？苏菲听我说，再想想，别把事做绝了。	That's true. Isn't there any way to have it both ways? Please, Sophie, take my suggestion, think again, don't go into dead end.

Table 2
Dialogue and Translation from *the Young Empress*

The Austrian film *the Young Empress* introduced the style of European royalty to China and popularized the trend of princess fashion. In this clip, the conversation between Sophie and Ludovika is stylistically royal. Demonstrated in Table 2, two noble women are sitting together to negotiate Sissi's role in the court, full of upper-class elegance, delicate language, and competition of family powers. Sophie is the queen of Austria and is greatly powerful, ruling over the country and royal members; so, her tone is more powerful and indifferent, and Ludovika is unable to compete. For example: “这么说你到维也纳来看我，就为了兴师问罪？”(literal meaning: It seems that you came here to blame me instead of visiting me?) and “兴师问罪”(literal meaning: denounce me strongly) express threatening feelings which match the Queen's role. Meanwhile, the Chinese four-character idiom represents a more educated and graceful manner as this is how highly civilized members, such as royal people in the old-time, would talk in China. In this sentence, “难道皇后就能离开她的皇帝了吗？”(literal meaning: And the empress needs her emperor!) further shows the queen's temper and intense political vision, which renders her more cruel than her sister, Ludovika. On the contrary, Ludovika, the Duchess, cares about nothing but her children's happiness. As she is of a lower class in the court, Ludovika speaks with gentle persuasion, suggestion, and soft affection. Such as: “对是对，难道就没别的方法二者兼顾吗？”(literal meaning: That's true. Isn't there any way to have it both ways?) and “苏菲听我说，再想想，别把事做绝了。”(literal meaning: Please Sophie, take my suggestion, think again, don't go into dead end). Even though her daughter was treated harshly in court, Ludovika, as a mother, simply tries to persuade the queen in a civilized manner, not intending to confront her. Ludovika's translation stands as gentle, mild, and nice compared to Sophie's strong words.

By this time, film translation began to function as a way to communicate and teach about foreign cultures from developed countries. According to Ma Zhengqi, dubbed films are the windows on the world, the inevitable choices of international cultural communication, and the pursuit of art (Ma, 2005). The incentive to watch dubbed movies (or the factor that attracted Chinese viewers to dubbed movies) was its exotic and fashionable style and tone. This can explain why the so-called 'dubbing tone' appeared and influenced movie translation for years.

C. Waning phase (1994–2000)

The year 1994 symbolized a time of imported western films, with Hollywood as a typical example; however, it also marked the decline of dubbing translation and gave rise to subtitling. Unforeseen troubles gradually emerged when reform was applied in the dubbed film industry. For example, issues such as distribution modes, business operation, translation crew change, new DVD format, and others negatively affected the translation industry. More importantly, dubbed TV dramas were broadcast on television stations and soon became more popular than dubbed films countrywide. (Tan, 2014)

Thus, multiple factors affected dubbed movies, pushing the industry into a waning phase. The origins of imported films had changed significantly from third-world countries to Hollywood features; here, the world was experiencing many economic structural shifts. Meanwhile, progressively more horror movies, action movies, and sci-fi movies were imported to increase box office earnings; over 60% of these were action movies from Hollywood. Based on this phenomenon, it is not sufficient to analyze

the dubbing translation itself or the category of films. Rather, social, aesthetic taste, audience composition, and consumerism trends negatively influenced the dubbing translation industry and should be examined.

D. Internet phase (2000 to present)

If the Hollywood import represents a plight for dubbing translation, the internet undoubtedly puts an end to dubbed films in cinemas. Chen Danqing, a well-known scholar and artist, once asserted (2008) that dubbed films were supposed to die because they had already fallen behind contemporary times and young people. With the advent of the internet era, technology advances, the movie and drama market's upheaval, and the rise of fan culture, dubbing translation is being criticized. It is judged for its lack of timeliness, unnatural dubbing tone, high cost, out-of-date aesthetics, inability to interact with fans, and so on. Meanwhile, with more and more young people learning or being willing to learn English, movies originally in English (often American films) are strongly impacting dubbing translation in China. Imported by a regulating authority, foreign films are usually distributed in two versions, original sound and dubbed into Chinese. However, online reviews are often unfriendly towards dubbed versions based on some social media community or film review platforms such as Zhihu (equivalent to Quora), Weibo (equivalent to Twitter), or Douban (equivalent to IMDb).

Here, the intrinsic reasons for this decline need to be put aside, and the social environment needs to be surveyed to solve this problem. Unfortunately, dubbed films have struggled to find a new format to increase their popularity. Celebrity dubbing, where the main characters of imported films are dubbed by China's film stars or singers, as well as professional dubbing, somehow, might be unimportant or might even be replaced.

The subtitled version of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* was chosen for this analysis, the very first film of the epic Harry Potter franchise. The clip below (Table 3) depicts the scene where Harry (the protagonist) has won the fight against Voldemort (the antagonist) in the dungeon and has woken up in the Hogwarts School hospital. The headmaster, Dumbledore, comes to visit him, and an illuminating conversation happens between them.

Characters	Original Sound	Subtitles
Harry	How is it I got the stone, sir? One minute I was staring in the mirror and...	我怎么得到魔法石的? 先前我还在照镜子, 不一会儿,
Dumbledore	You see, only a person who wanted to find the Stone, find it but not use it, would be able to get it. That's one of my brilliant ideas and, between you and me, that is saying something.	要知道, 只有那种一心想要找到石头, 而又不利用它的人, 才能最终得到它。 这件事整个过程都在我的计划之中, 你我很默契, 自始至终都很默契。哈哈哈哈哈。
Harry	Does that mean, with the Stone gone, that Voldemort can never come back?	那么说, 现在石头没了, 伏地魔就不会回来了?
Dumbledore	I'm afraid there are ways he can return. Harry, do you know why Professor Quirrell couldn't bear to have you touch him? It was because of your mother. She sacrificed herself for you, and that kind of act leaves a mark. No, no, this kind of mark cannot be seen. It lives in your very skin.	啊, 恐怕, 他有许多办法可以回来。哈利你是不是知道, 奇洛教授为什么经不起你碰他。那是因为你母亲, 为了你她牺牲了自己。这样的行为, 会留下一个印记。不, 这种印记是看不见的, 和你的肌肤融为一体。
Harry	What is it?	是什么?
Dumbledore	Love, Harry, love.	爱, 哈利。是爱。

Table 3
Dialogue and Translation from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

The Harry Potter films were adapted from the children's books by JK Rowling, which means that the language used is easy to understand. In this clip, Dumbledore, as a sage in the magic world, was designed to speak with wisdom and profundity. The translation, however, in the dubbed version, fails to realize the effective equivalence by complicating the translated speech. Harry,

as a teenage boy, is unable to speak too wisely but, rather, speaks simply. Based on this paradoxical situation, rhetoric reconstruction is the best and only way to reconcile the translation of scripts.

Under the topic of "Uncovering Secrets," Dumbledore's explanation should be plain and easy for Harry to understand or, in reality, for child viewers. For example, "You see, only a person, who wanted to find the Stone, find it but not use it, would be able to get it" was dubbed as "要知道，只有那种一心想要找到石头，而又不利用它的人，才能最终得到它。"(literal meaning: As you know, only the person who wants to find it but not use it, can finally have it). In traditional Chinese expressions, this sentence is convoluted and complicated, especially for children, with its intensive personal pronouns. The same problem appears in Dumbledore's other lines, "Harry, do you know why Professor Quirrell couldn't bear to have you touch him?" was translated as "哈利你是不是知道，奇洛教授为什么经不起你碰他。"(literal meaning: Harry, don't you know why Professor Quirrell can't bear you to touch him?). "经不起" in Chinese is much more difficult to comprehend than the corresponding word "bear" in English linguistics. When Dumbledore explains the "mark" on Harry's skin, the translation does not grasp the contextual reconstruction as the "mark on the skin" is not particularly significant in Chinese culture, unlike in Western culture. The more reasonable way was to reconstruct the "mark on the skin" into "emulate the protecting of life" (生命的平安符), which caters to Chinese peoples' visions of life and death.

Whether for Harry Potter, the famous *Avengers* or animated movies, the common characters in these movies in the new millennium incline more towards fictional and imaginative characters, creating imaginary worlds with nonexistent and supernatural personas. In accordance with this trend, movie translation is seeking a brand-new approach to survive, such as celebrity-dubbing, web pop word translation, and other strategies. Translation's function and aesthetic values are moving away from being artistic, literal, or professional toward being entertaining, popular, and commercial.

4. The linkages between film translation and social environment

Instead of domestic-oriented translation and dubbing tones, nowadays, original languages are preferred, and celebrity dubbing is more welcome. This brings us to ask, where is dubbed translation going in the future? The answer is yes. In 1953, when dubbed films were still new, the director of the National Film Bureau of China, then Chen Huangmei, pointed out at a research conference about movie translation that the dubbed films would always exist as long as there were language differences among nations (Li, 2010). This is because dubbed films evolve according to changes in social structures and environments. Below, the linkages between movie dubbing translation and social environments are explored. However, according to the communication purpose of the film, the screening platform, the cost of film creation, the preferences of the audience, and other factors, it is decided whether to adopt dubbing translation or subtitle translation.

A. Social Priority Determines Film Translation Function

Each historical period has its own social priorities. When the People's Republic of China was founded, political messages and propaganda were prioritized, leading to the wide circulation of Soviet Union films. With Reformation and Opening-up policies, the learning and communicating functions of dubbed translations were eagerly required by Chinese people so they could gain access to foreign cultures. Then, the congenial global environment and China's opening-up contributed to the golden age of dubbing translation. Today, worldwide social structures and environments are becoming ever more diverse, so dubbing translation seems unimportant and seems to be fading away since it does not meet the young generation's expectations. Thus, subtitle translation is much more preferred, and dubbing film explores their entertaining function to re-attract audiences.

In addition to crew construction and technology factors, functions of movie dubbing translation have always been led by social priorities and, in turn, mirror society.

B. Market Needs Affect Modes of Film Translation

It is well-known that movie translation can be divided into two general categories, dubbing and subtitling. Fan-sub is a new product born out of combinations of technological advances, fan-culture, and social platforms. The market is, indeed, currently composed of these three modes of film translation.

The competition between dubbing and subtitling has always existed and has gradually intensified as the two strive to occupy the market share. In metropolis cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and others, subtitled films are usually released in cinemas, while, in smaller cities, the attendance for dubbed films is higher (Ma, 2017). In bigger cities, it may be that young viewers are more well-educated, especially in English; therefore, they prefer the original sound with subtitles to access foreign languages and pop culture. Their preference is reflected in box office earnings, determining how many of the films released are subtitled versus dubbed. Regarding economic factors, subtitled movies cost less time, labor, and money to be produced than dubbing movies. There are many popular fan-sub websites and online communities pushing this new way of translating movies, such as Renren, CNXP, UUniao, and others. With the resources of foreign films and large numbers of fans, fan-sub is thriving, even more so than

professional subtitling and dubbing. However, problems such as copyright have been limiting fan-sub and urgently need to be solved for its future evolution.

On the other hand, in certain fields, such as animated films targeting children and teenagers or films in languages like Spanish, French, or German, dubbing translation still holds its position, distributing these to wider audiences. These groups of consumers stand strongly behind dubbed films and support their development.

C. Composition of Population Guides Style of Film Translation

The target audience decides the style of dubbing translation. In early times, most Chinese people were not exposed to foreign languages or cultures. Only film translation scholars like Chen Xuyi or Yuan Naichen, who had mastered the art of dramas in several languages, were able to understand imported movies. With a generally lower level of education in the population at that time, domesticated translation aimed to be welcoming and was circulated to help people to gain more knowledge of the world. Later on, along with higher education levels across the country, people were more likely to enjoy exotic movie styles and fashionable dubbing tones to learn how to become trendy themselves. Today, younger people have become the major consumers of films according to the user portrait, *Report of China's movie market and users in 2018* published by Alibaba. Viewers under 19 occupied 8% of the total in 2018, increasing from 2% in 2016 to 4% in 2017 and 8% in 2018. Viewers under 25 occupied almost 39%, signifying that younger people have become the most important group of viewers. Whether dubbing styles will shift to be more fashionable or the industry will enforce professional ethics and standards will be up to the younger generation.

5. Conclusion

The film translation history represents the cultural context, and the social connect with the world. This research adopts the theory of sociological imagination to interpret how history evolves and where it is heading in the future. According to the investigation, the paper finds out that the evolution of film translation (social functions, aesthetic standards, social values, etc.) from its start to its heyday, to its waning, and up to nowadays is closely bound to the temporal social environment and structure. The whole history can be divided into four stages, each with a different translation situation and style. Dubbing translation reached its summit during the original phase and developing phase, while the subtitling translation takes place when blockbuster films are continuously imported into China. In conclusion, the social priorities, market requisitions, and audience are the key elements that affect the film translation history of China. This paper which examines the history of film translation from the angle of the sociological imagination brings a new perspective and field to film translation. The study of translation does not stop at linguistics but is closely linked to society. Nowadays, along with the diverse films being imported into China and Chinese films stepping overseas, dubbing translation is back on the stage again with more social functions. At the same time, subtitling translation is also in front of new challenges for fan-sub with the rise of online communication of films. All the above would be the new directions for film translation studies.

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