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# Subtitle Translation and Humor Rendering in Chinese Comedy Films

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## Preface

With the deepening of globalization, Chinese comedy films have gradually become an important medium of cultural communication, and the cross-cultural transmission of humorous elements relies on subtitle translation. This book is inspired and motivated by Gideon Toury (2012) and his *Descriptive Translation Studies* towards the humor elements, together with the translation of film subtitles in a Chinese context. There are four films that served as the data for detailed analysis, including *Goodbye Mr. Looser*, *Hello, Mrs. Money* and *Too Cool To Kill*. In the process, the authors examine the correlation between the internal and external characteristics of humor translation. It is noticed that these features are also limited by language, cultural, and multimodal gaps. Confused by the manipulation of substituting and rewriting the humor in source and target subtitles, the translators thus need to focus more on the connotation, while its decline should be noticed in cultural meanings. In summary, the study employs DTS to find a more dynamic and mixed-mode approach to analyze the existing dilemma in subtitle translation: the ways to balance equivalence and functionality. The authors hope this book will pave the way for broadening the theoretical understanding of humor translation in film subtitles, especially between Chinese and English. Furthermore, scholars who are interested in cultural adaptation and multimodal analysis may find the approaches useful or relevant in their own research.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In the context of globalization, subtitle translation is a bridge connecting different cultures, and it especially assumes an important function in Chinese comedy films. This study aims to explore the relationship between subtitle translation based on descriptive translation theory in the rendering of humor, revealing its key role in cultural transmission and audience acceptance. Humor is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also an embodiment of cultural characteristics, so factors such as cultural references, language games and situational contexts must be taken into account in translation. To this end, this section will analyse the background and significance of the study, clarify the aims and problems of the study, and introduce the research methodology adopted. These elements lay the foundation for subsequent in-depth discussions on the importance of norms, notions of equivalence and context in translation practice, aiming to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework for a better understanding of humor in Chinese comedy films and the complexity of their subtitle translation.

### 1.1 Research Background and Significance

In recent years, Chinese comedy films have gradually emerged globally as an important carrier of cultural communication. With the acceleration of the internationalization process, China's film market has been growing, and more and more Chinese comedy films have begun to go to the world and participate in the competition and exchange in the international film market. This phenomenon not only promotes the global dissemination of Chinese culture, but also puts forward higher requirements for subtitle translation (Chen & Wang, 2022). How to preserve and render humor, as the core element of comedy films, in cross-cultural communication has become a major challenge for subtitle translation.

The global rise of Chinese comedy films is attributed to the rapid development of the domestic film industry and the continuous improvement of creative standards. From the

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives Guiding the Research**

This chapter summarizes the theoretical framework of this study, and combines descriptive translation studies (DTS) with translation norms to construct an analytical structure for the study of humor in Chinese comedy film subtitles. The framework is a synthesis of Turi's normative theory and Chesterman's translation strategy concepts, aiming to systematically analyze how translation norms shape humorous adaptations in cross-cultural contexts.

### **3.1 Descriptive Translation Studies: Foundations and Principles**

The descriptive translation Studies (DTS) proposed by Gideon Toury (2012) completely subverts the single pursuit of "fidelity" in traditional translation theories, and instead regards translation as a dynamic practice subject to socio-cultural norms. The core of DTS is to reveal the actual laws of translation behavior through empirical observation, rather than setting idealized translation standards in advance. This methodological innovation provides a new perspective for the analysis of humor translation in Chinese comedy film subtitles, especially focusing on how the target culture shapes the translation strategy and how translators achieve functional equivalence under normative constraints. The following three core principles are discussed, and combined with specific cases to clarify its theoretical connotation and practical value.

The core concept of DTS is "goal-oriented", that is, the essence of the translated text is the product of the target culture, and its form and function need to conform to the cultural expectations and acceptance habits of the target audience. Toury points out that the "adequacy" of a translation should not be measured solely by the source text, but by its actual effect in the target context. For example, if the dialect humor commonly used in Chinese comedy films is translated into English, it may lose its comic tension due to



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