

Cultural Identity of Mainland Chinese, Hongkonger and Taiwanese: A Glimpse from Hollywood Film Title Translation

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Abstract : After China has just exceeded the USA as the top Hollywood film market in 2018, Hollywood studios have been adapting the taste, preference, casting and even film title translation to resonate with the Chinese audience. Due to the huge foreign demands, Hollywood film directors are paying closer attention to the translation of their products, as film titles are entry gates to the film and serve advertising, informative, aesthetic functions. Other than film directors and studios, comments over quality film title translation also appear on various online clip viewing platforms, online media, and magazines. In particular, netizens in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan seems to defend film titles in their own region while despising the other two regions. In view of the endless debates and lack of systematic analysis on film title translation in Greater China, the study aims at investigating the translation of Hollywood film titles (from English to Chinese) across Greater China based on Venuti's (1991; 1995; 1998; 2001) concept of domestication and foreignization. To offer a comparison over time, a mini-corpus was built comprised of the top 70 most popular Hollywood film titles in 1987- 1988, 1997- 1998, 2007- 2008 and 2017- 2018 of Greater China respectively. Altogether, 560 source texts and 1680 target texts of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan were compared against each other. The three regions are found to have a distinctive style and patterns of translation. For instance, a sizable number of film titles are foreignized in mainland China by adopting literal translation and transliteration, whereas Hong Kong and Taiwan prefer domestication. Hong Kong tends to adopt a more vulgar style by using colloquial Cantonese slangs and even swear words, associating characters with negative connotations. Also, English is used as a form of domestication in Hong Kong from 1987 till 2018. Use of English as a strategy of domestication was never found in mainland nor Taiwan. On the contrary, Taiwanese target texts tend to adopt a cute and child-like style by using repetitive words and positive connotations. Even if English was used, it was used as foreignization. As film titles represent cultural products of popular culture, it is suspected that Hongkongers would like to develop cultural identity via adopting style distinctive from mainland China by vulgarization and negativity. Hongkongers also identify themselves as international cosmopolitan, leading to their identification with English. It is also suspected that due to former colonial rule of Japan, Taiwan adopts a popular culture similar to Japan, with cute and childlike expressions.

Keywords : cultural identification, ethnic identification, Greater China, film title translation

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