

# **An Initial Exploration of the Chinese Translation of the "Frozen" Series from the Perspective of Skopos Theory**

**Puyan Zhang**

*Henan University of Technology, Zhengzhou, Henan, China*

**Abstract:** Subtitle translation of movies plays a vital role in cultural communication, and the "Frozen" series, as an animation innovation, presents a higher translation challenge. This paper, starting from the perspective of the Skopos theory, investigates the application strategies of the Skopos theory in the subtitle translation of this film series, aiming to promote cultural exchange and understanding effectively. This paper will study the subtitle translation of the "Frozen" series from the standpoint of Skopos theory, compare the application of Skopos theory in Chinese-English translation, further understand the relevant theories of translation purpose, and better grasp the practice of Skopos theory in movie subtitle translation.

**Keywords:** Skopos Theory; "Frozen"; Chinese Translation; Subtitle Translation.

## **1. Introduction**

With the continuous strengthening of globalization, the ongoing advancement of science and technology, and the deepening execution of China's open-door policy, cultural exchanges between countries have become increasingly widespread and convenient. Movies are a crucial medium for cultural interaction, and movie subtitle translation plays a positive role in broadening the cultural horizons and elevating the thoughts and concepts of the masses [1]. The audience for the "Frozen" film series is diverse, and its translation poses significant challenges, necessitating the application of Skopos theory. This paper aims to study the translation characteristics and strategies from this perspective, providing references and assistance for future subtitle translations.

## **2. Overview of the "Frozen" Film Series**

"Frozen" and "Frozen 2" are Disney's film

series, adapted from Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Snow Queen." The story narrates the tale of Princess Elsa from Arendelle, who possesses unique magical abilities to create ice and snow. The plot revolves around Elsa accidentally injuring her sister Anna and embarks on an adventure after becoming a queen to break the curse. Due to the innovative style and enhanced production quality of this film, it received rave reviews upon release and garnered many international awards: the 86th Academy Awards, 71st Golden Globe Awards, and so on...

## **3. Subtitle Translation of Film and Television Works from the Perspective of Skopos Theory**

Subtitle translation for film and television productions mainly falls into two categories: intralingual and interlingual subtitles. Intralingual subtitles refer to using another linguistic sign to represent a current linguistic sign within the same language. In contrast, interlingual subtitles involve using a language different from the present one to express its content, commonly known as subtitle translation. Subtitles must be highly synchronized with the dialogues, actions, and content shown in the film or television product. They also need to adapt to changes in characters' emotions and states [2].

### **3.1 Factors Influencing Subtitle Translation**

Subtitle translation is influenced by various factors, including time and space, dramatic style, character image, and target language. The effect of time and space means subtitles must be concise to not interfere with the viewer's experience. The influence of dramatic style lies in different styles implying varied meanings for the same sentence, thus necessitating appropriate adjustments in subtitle translation. The impact of character image and target language is similar to the effect of dramatic style.

### 3.2 Significance of Researching the Subtitle Translation of "Frozen"

"The aim of film translation is to strive to convey the language and cultural information of the film, to better realize the aesthetic and commercial value of the film, and to attract the audience to the fullest extent" [3]. In movies, subtitle translation emphasizes conveying the storyline, reflecting characters' traits, adapting to the film's pace, and aligning with the original language's features and style. By researching the subtitle translation of the "Frozen" series, we can gain a better understanding of the intended film plot or dialogue, and grasp the underlying ideas conveyed by the movie.

### 4. Analysis of the Subtitle Translation of "Frozen" from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Starting from the Skopos Theory, this paper delves into the subtitle translation of the "Frozen" film series. It aims to explore the application of Skopos Theory in the series, better understand the application of Skopos Theory in film subtitle translation, and its influence on it. A deeper comprehension of the differences between Chinese and foreign language cultures can provide valuable references and assistance for future film subtitle translations. All Chinese translations in this paper are based on subtitles provided on the iQiyi video platform.

#### 4.1 Application of Skopos Theory in "Frozen"

##### 4.1.1 Application of the principle of purpose in "Frozen"

Skopos Theory posits, "The primary rule all translations should adhere to is the purpose rule: the aim of a translation determines the entire process of the translation act, that is, the result determines the method" [4]. "Translation is an activity based on the source text, and every act of translation has a certain purpose, producing a result, a new context, or event" [5].

In these two films, the purpose of subtitle translation is to help the audience who watch the translated subtitles understand the gripping storyline better, get to know the characters, appreciate the original culture, and deeply experience intercultural communication.

Example 1: Sven: Are you telling me tonight your gonna get down on one knee?

Analysis: In this scene, Kristoff is singing. Why does Sven's speech appear in Kristoff's song? It's because Sven, being a reindeer, cannot speak but has its thoughts and feelings. Kristoff, being a close companion of Sven, can "hear" these unspoken thoughts. The context of this dialogue is after enduring many hardships, Kristoff wishes to spend his life with Anna and thus contemplates proposing. "Get down on one knee" literally means "kneel on one knee." Here, it's translated as "propose," aligning with the narrative and making Kristoff's intentions clear. The translation not only compresses the information but also clearly conveys to the audience the purpose of his action.

##### 4.1.2 Application of the coherence rule in "Frozen"

The coherence rule emphasizes intra-textual coherence [6]. It stresses that translations should conform to the linguistic habits and cultural background of the target audience, ensuring natural and fluent language that's easily understood.

Example 1: Anna: Like the feel of your hand in mine.

Analysis: Here, "your hand in mine" could be directly translated as "your hand in my hand." However, the translator creatively transformed it to "qianshou" (holding hands) and adjusted the sentence structure for fluency, making the phrasing more natural and coherent for the target audience.

##### 4.1.3 Application of the fidelity rule in "Frozen"

The fidelity rule stresses inter-textual coherence [7]. It emphasizes that the translated text should be accepted by the target audience and conform to the social culture of the target language, using flexible and ingenious translation strategies to achieve cross-cultural communication.

Example 1: Kristoff: North is south, right is left, when you're gone.

Analysis: This line is from a song Kristoff sings when he realizes Anna has left him to join Elsa and Olaf on their quest. "North is south" literally means he's lost his bearings. The translator has chosen "nan yuan bei zhe," a unique Chinese idiom meaning "going in the opposite direction," which matches Kristoff's situation in the forest and is familiar to

Chinese audiences, aligning with the fidelity principle.

#### **4.2 Translation Methods of "Frozen" from the Perspective of Skopos Theory**

The English and Chinese languages differ significantly in grammar, rhetoric, etc., so when translating between English and Chinese, a substantial amount of translation techniques are required for assistance [8]. Common translation methods mainly include literal translation, free translation, borrowing of idioms, addition, and omission. Combining the Skopos theory with translation methods to analyze the subtitles of the "Frozen" series can enhance the understanding of the film and its subtitles.

##### **4.2.1 Addition**

Addition refers to adding one or more words, phrases, or sentences to the original text while keeping its meaning unchanged, making the translation conform to the linguistic habits of the target audience in terms of grammar, format, etc. In the process of translating subtitles, one can incorporate supplements based on the audience's linguistic habits, helping them understand the plot better and appreciate the significance behind the movie.

Example 1: Anna: Enjoying your new permafrost, Olaf?

Analysis: After their adventure in "Frozen", Elsa used her magic to transform Olaf into a snowman that wouldn't melt. The translator supplemented the translation, interpreting "new permafrost" as "life where you won't melt". The direct translation of "new permafrost" is "new permanent frozen layer". By providing context from the plot's development, the translator made the translation flow naturally.

##### **4.2.2 Omission**

Omission is the opposite of addition. It involves removing certain words, phrases, or sentences from the original text while keeping its meaning largely unchanged, making the translation conform to the linguistic habits of the target audience [9]. Thus, translators can compress or omit redundant or unnecessary information in translation, reducing unnecessary burdens on the audience and providing a better movie-watching experience.

Example 1: Anna: I can't believe they're finally opening up the gates!

Example 2: Elsa: Oh well, it was all my fault.

Analysis: In examples 1 and 2, the translator compressed the source information for brevity. In example 1, "I can't believe" ("wo bugan xiangxin") was omitted. In example 2, "Oh well" ("ao, haoba") was left out. Both pieces of information were not reflected in the translated subtitles, but they did not hinder the audience's understanding of the plot. At the same time, it lightened the information processing for the audience, offering them a better viewing experience.

##### **4.2.3 Part-of-speech conversion**

As the name implies, part-of-speech conversion involves changing the grammatical category of certain words or phrases in translation, in line with the linguistic habits of the target audience. For instance, nouns in the source language might be translated as verbs in the target language, or adjectives might be converted to nouns, and so forth.

Example 1: Anna: Enjoying your new permafrost, Olaf?

Olaf: I'm just living the dream, Anna.

Olaf: How I wish this could last forever.

Analysis: In the sentence, "last" is clearly used as a verb, meaning "to continue" or "to persist". In translation, the translator has converted the verb "last" to the phrase "zhe yang" ("like this"). In Chinese, "zhe yang" is a demonstrative pronoun, typically referring back to a previously mentioned context. Given that Anna earlier asked Olaf if he enjoyed his perpetual state, "zhe yang" also signifies Olaf's never-melting life. Such a translation not only retains the original meaning but also fully takes into account the differences between the two languages, helping the audience understand better.

##### **4.2.4 Cultural imagery conversion**

Cultural imagery refers to unique symbols in each culture. The same item may symbolize different meanings across various cultures. Thus, it's essential to convert cultural imagery in translation. Simply put, it's about translating culturally symbolic elements in the source language to their equivalents in the target language. In subtitle translation, using proverbs, sayings, slang, idioms, and other culturally representative expressions can help the audience understand the storyline better, conveying the cultural essence.

Example 1: We will.

Analysis: The context for this line is Elsa seeing Anna, trembling from the internal icy

curse. As a queen, Elsa orders her attendants to find Prince Hans to break the spell on Anna, believing that only a true love's kiss can save her. The Chinese interpretation of "We will" is "women hui de". In this context, the translator has chosen "zun ming" ("At your command") for "We will". Both phrases are culturally equivalent; "zun ming" was historically used by servants in ancient China to acknowledge the commands of their superiors, aligning with the habits of Chinese viewers.

## 5. Conclusions

By analyzing the subtitle translations of Disney's "Frozen" and "Frozen 2" from the perspective of Skopos theory, it's evident that the theory plays an indispensable role in translating film works. The translators of this version have captured the characteristics of subtitle translation. Starting from the audience's movie-watching experience and combining the content conveyed by the film with the linguistic environment, they employed strategies like addition, omission, part-of-speech conversion, and cultural imagery conversion. These strategies adeptly handle the subtitles, enhance character portrayal, provide the audience with a comfortable and pleasant viewing experience, and play a vital role in promoting cultural exchange.

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