



A Skopos-Theory Perspective on the Vietnamese Translation of Culturally Loaded Terms in *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy's Rampage at Sea*

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Abstract. As Chinese film and television works increasingly reach international audiences, the role of film subtitle translation in cross-cultural communication has become increasingly prominent. As a translation form constrained by time and space, subtitle translation not only concerns the accurate conveyance of film content but also directly influences target-language audiences' understanding and acceptance of the source-language culture. The Vietnamese subtitles for the Chinese animated film *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy*, which draws from Chinese mythology, present significant challenges in translating numerous culturally loaded terms—a focal point in cross-cultural communication. Building upon existing research in film subtitle translation, this study employs the German functionalist school's Skopos Theory as its theoretical framework. Taking the Vietnamese subtitles of *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy* as its subject, it systematically organizes and categorizes the culturally loaded terms appearing in the film, analyzing their translation strategies within specific contexts. The study examines translators' application of methods such as transliteration, literal translation, and free translation from three perspectives: Social Culture-Specific Terms, Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms, and Religious Culture-Specific Terms. Findings reveal that the Vietnamese subtitles generally revolve around the core translation goal of cultural dissemination, achieving to some extent the dual objectives of commercial communication and conveying Chinese mythological culture. However, the treatment of certain culturally loaded terms still falls short in fully realizing specific translation purposes. Through analyzing concrete translation examples, this study aims to provide theoretical reference for the Vietnamese translation practice of Chinese animated films.

Keywords: *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy*; Vietnamese subtitle translation; Skopos Theory; Culturally Loaded Words.

1 Introduction

Film subtitle translation refers to the explanatory supplementary text displayed at the bottom of the screen during film playback, providing interpretations of characters' dialogue and other relevant information. The emergence of film subtitles enables audi-

ences to grasp film content comprehensively—both aurally and visually—and appreciate cinematic artistry.[1] In recent years, as more domestic films gain popularity overseas, subtitle translation has become a vital channel for cross-cultural communication. The ultimate goal of subtitle translation is to enable film audiences to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers through subtitles, understand the intended meaning of the film, appreciate foreign audiovisual works, and achieve cross-cultural communication.[2] This places high demands on the subtitle translation of audiovisual works. Li Yunxing believes the evaluation standard lies in whether the subtitles can most effectively provide the most relevant information within the limited time and space, in coordination with the visuals and audio.[3]

2 Overview of Film Subtitle Translation Studies

Currently, scholars across various fields in China are highly focused on subtitle translation, with research primarily conducted from diverse translation theory perspectives. These include Skopos Theory, cultural translation studies, ecotranslation, communicative theory, cross-cultural communication, cultural outreach, functional equivalence theory, and the perspectives of domestication and foreignization. Yang Qunyan contends that domestication is the most widely employed strategy in film translation, as it prioritizes the audience's reception, making the content more accessible and effectively managing cultural differences across nations.[4] Li Yunxing, however, advocates for a direct approach in handling cultural terms within subtitles, minimizing or avoiding domestication, fusion, and interpretation strategies.[5] Subtitle translation should adopt strategies tailored to specific films, enabling audiences to accurately grasp the intended meaning of dialogue within limited timeframes while integrating audio effects and visuals. Existing research on subtitle translation into foreign languages is extensive, primarily concentrated in English translation. Currently, domestic scholars have conducted very little research on subtitle translation into Vietnamese. Only four studies specifically examine Vietnamese subtitle translation strategies: Wu Yiqing's "A Study on Subtitle Translation Strategies and Methods for the Film <Confucius> from a Cultural Translation Perspective" (2021), He Yanhong's Analysis of Chinese Subtitle Translation for the Vietnamese Film *The Woman in White Silk* (2013), Zhu Qiqi's Exploration of Vietnamese Translation Strategies for Chinese TV Series Titles (2019), and Liu Li's Study on the Vietnamese Translation of Culturally Loaded Words in Chinese Animated Film Subtitles (2022). It can be said that there remains a gap in domestic research on Vietnamese subtitle translation for film and television.

3 Analysis of the Appropriateness of Vietnamese Translation for "Ne Zha: The Demon Boy" from a Translation Purpose Perspective

Adapted from Chinese mythology, the animated film *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy* (hereafter referred to as *Ne Zha 1*) achieved tremendous success domestically upon release,

grossing 5.036 billion yuan at the box office. It also demonstrated strong influence in the Vietnamese market. Its official YouTube video has garnered millions of views, with the comment section filled with enthusiastic praise from local audiences such as "Phim hay quá luôn" (The movie is amazing!) and "Hay quá trời" (It's so awesome!). In recent years, translation studies on the *Nezha* film series have remained a hot topic. According to the author's statistics on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), using keyword retrieval methods and focusing on "*Nezha*," "subtitles," and "translation," after excluding literature from fields such as journalism and film production, it was found that since the release of *Nezha: The Demon Boy* in 2018, the *Nezha* film series has generated a total of 1,000 articles subtitles," and "translation" as focal points, and excluding literature from fields such as journalism and film production, the results show that since the release of *Ne Zha* in 2019, there have been a total of 108 pieces of literature related to the translation theme of the *Ne Zha* film series. Research has focused on translation strategies and methods for culturally loaded words, translation effects, and shortcomings.

Skopos Theory, proposed by German scholar Hans J. Vermeer, asserts that translation is a purposeful act, with the entire process determined by its objectives. This theory encompasses three core principles: purpose principle, coherence principle, and fidelity principle. Among these, the purpose principle is central, as the selection of translation strategies and methods depends on the specific goals each translation aims to achieve. Skopos Theory holds that the ultimate outcome of translation is the target audience's acceptance of the translated text. Therefore, before generating the target text, translators should analyze the needs of the target readers. The historical context and cultural literacy of the target audience determine their differing demands for the translation. Translators must account for individual differences among target readers and tailor their translations accordingly.[6] The core translation purpose of *Nezha 1* is to successfully convey a commercially successful animated blockbuster rich in Chinese mythological elements to Vietnamese audiences. Its objective extends beyond realizing the film's commercial value in the Vietnamese market; it also carries the mission of effectively disseminating Chinese mythological culture.

Vietnamese audiences possess both cultural affinity and distinct comprehension barriers when engaging with Chinese mythological animated films like *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy*. On one hand, frequent historical cultural exchanges between China and Vietnam have left a substantial legacy of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary in the Vietnamese language. Concepts like "急急如律令" (Urgent as the Law), "天庭" (Heavenly Court), and "傀儡符" (Puppet Talisman) evoke more immediate associations for Vietnamese audiences than for Western viewers, providing a foundational basis for cross-cultural reception. On the other hand, the intricate internal structure of Chinese mythology—with its concentrated Taoist concepts, mythological character relationships, and cultural metaphors—often leaves Vietnamese audiences lacking systematic mythological background knowledge. This frequently leads to misunderstandings at the level of culturally loaded words, thereby affecting their overall grasp of the plot and character portrayals. Therefore, within this context, this paper adopts the core theory of German functional translation studies—teleology—as its guiding framework. Taking the Vietnamese subtitled version of *Ne Zha* as its research subject, it focuses on examining the translation

methods and strategy choices for culturally loaded words in the film's subtitles. This study aims to address the following questions: First, what types of culturally loaded words primarily appear in the film's subtitles, and what are their distribution characteristics? Second, what translation methods did the translators primarily employ when handling different types of culturally loaded words? Third, what are the purposes of these translation strategies, and do they facilitate Vietnamese audiences' understanding of the film's content and cultural implications?

4 Translation Strategies for Culturally Charged Terms in "Ne Zha" from a Finality Perspective

4.1 Types and Distribution of Culturally Loaded Terms

Significant differences exist among world cultures in historical backgrounds, geographical locations, social systems, religions, beliefs, living environments, and ways of thinking. These differences have led to the gradual formation of distinct linguistic systems and modes of expression with unique cultural connotations. At the lexical level, this manifests as culturally loaded words.[7] Culturally loaded words constitute an essential component of the film *Ne Zha 1*, bearing the crucial task of cultural transmission. Based on the classification by American translation theorist Eugene Nida, the culturally loaded words in *Ne Zha* can be categorized into five major types: Ecological Culture-Specific Terms, Material Culture-Specific Terms, Social Culture-Specific Terms, Religious Culture-Specific Terms, Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms. Using the complete Chinese subtitle text of *Ne Zha* as the corpus source, this study systematically collects, classifies, and statistically analyzes the culturally loaded words appearing in the film.

The methodology involved: first, meticulously reviewing each subtitle line to preliminarily identify terms with distinct cultural connotations; second, classifying these terms based on their primary cultural attributes. Specifically: terms related to natural phenomena, cosmology, or natural spaces were categorized as ecological cultural loadings; terms related to artifacts, magical treasures, and physical forms were categorized as material cultural-laden words; terms associated with social identity, social relations, and collective order were classified as social cultural-laden words; terms connected to deity systems, religious concepts, and cultivation practices were grouped as Religious Culture-Specific Terms; and terms involving fixed expressions, incantations, idioms, and linguistically meaningful forms were designated as linguistic cultural-laden words. Third, based on the established classification criteria, quantitative statistics were compiled for each category of cultural load words. Finally, the statistical results were organized and analyzed to reveal the overall distribution patterns of cultural load words within the film. It should be noted that cultural load words inherently possess interpretive flexibility. This study systematically organized and statistically analyzed representative and analytically valuable vocabulary under clearly defined classification standards. The statistical findings objectively reflect the overall distribution of cultural load words in the film from a methodological perspective.

The distribution of cultural terms across categories is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Cultural Loaded Words by Category

Category	Quantity	Percentage	Examples
Ecological Culture-Specific Terms	37	11.5%	Thunder, Flame, Undersea, Wind and Fire
Material Culture-Specific Terms	36	11.0%	Heaven-Shaking Brocade, Fire-Pointed Spear
Social Culture-Specific Terms	62	19.0%	Commoners, General, Checkpoint, Birthday Celebration
Religious Culture-Specific Terms	143	43.8%	Heavenly Lord, Jade Emperor, Celestial Court, Investiture of the Gods
Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms	48	14.7%	Urgent as a command, acting on Heaven's

Among these, Religious Culture-Specific Terms are the most numerous and account for the highest proportion, significantly exceeding the other four categories. This outcome is closely tied to the film's subject matter. *Ne Zha 1* centers its narrative framework on Chinese Taoist mythology, integrating religious concepts such as the "Celestial Court," "Deification," and "Trial by Tribulation." This frequent appearance of religious cultural vocabulary forms the core of its cultural expression.

In contrast, Ecological Culture-Specific Terms and Material Culture-Specific Terms are relatively scarce, primarily concentrated in representative mythical artifact names and descriptions of specific locations. Though recurring in the film, these terms exhibit limited overall quantity, reflecting a pattern of "high recognition, low frequency."

Social Culture-Specific Terms and Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms exhibit relatively balanced quantities, jointly forming the foundational layer of the film's cultural expression. This indicates that the film not only constructs its worldview through religious mythological systems but also leverages social order and uniquely Chinese linguistic expressions to collectively enhance cultural atmosphere and narrative impact.

In summary, all five categories of culturally loaded words appear in *Ne Zha 1*. Among them, Social Culture-Specific Terms, Religious Culture-Specific Terms, Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms account for a higher proportion, while Ecological Culture-Specific Terms and Material Culture-Specific Terms appear less frequently. Therefore, this paper primarily selects the three categories with higher proportions as the focus of analysis.

4.2 Social Culture-Specific Terms

Social Culture-Specific Terms refer to lexical items within a specific culture that carry unique concepts, reflect particular social structures, kinship relations, honorific customs, values, or traditions. Their meanings often lack direct equivalents in other languages. They primarily include honorifics, social relationship terms, and etiquette/custom terms. In the film *Ne Zha 1*, such vocabulary forms the narrative foundation for character relationships and social context. Honorifics primarily encompass character titles [e.g., "哪吒" (*Ne Zha*), "敖丙" (*Ao Bing*)], skill-based designations [e.g., "龙王

三太子" (Third Prince of the Dragon King)], social titles [e.g., "李大人" (Lord Li)], and referential terms [e.g., "魔童" (Demon Child)]. Fictional place names mainly refer to mythical settings like "龙宫" (Dragon Palace) and "陈塘关" (Chentang Pass). After reviewing all Vietnamese subtitles for *Nezha 1*, this study selected representative Social Culture-Specific Terms for analysis. These terms not only drive the plot but also encapsulate traditional Chinese social structures and mythological spatial concepts. They represent high-risk areas for "lexical gaps" in cultural translation, where translation strategy choices directly impact Vietnamese audiences' comprehension of character relationships and social context. Guided by the principle of purpose, translators must flexibly apply translation methods based on their core objective: ensuring Vietnamese audiences clearly grasp character identities, statuses, and relationships while perceiving their cultural distinctiveness. The following sections will specifically explore the application of transliteration, literal translation, and phonetic-semantic hybrid approaches in translating such terms.

Example 1 Original: This is General Li Jing of Chen Tang Pass

Translation: Đây là Lý Tĩnh, Lý tổng binh của ải Trần Đường

In translating this line, the translator employed Sino-Vietnamese transliteration, rendering "李靖" (Li Jing) and "陈塘关" (Chen Tang Pass) as "Lý Tĩnh" (Li Jing) and "Trần Đường" (Chen Tang Pass) respectively, directly drawing upon existing Sino-Vietnamese terms in the Vietnamese lexicon. Sino-Vietnamese words in Vietnamese refer to the vast number of Chinese terms introduced into the language, also known as Chinese loanwords or Sino-Vietnamese borrowings. These are Chinese words whose meanings originate from specific Chinese terms (including Chinese dialects), whose phonetic forms are wholly or partially borrowed from corresponding Vietnamese pronunciations, and which have undergone varying degrees of Vietnamese adaptation.[8] When translating "Lý Tĩnh" and "Trần Đường," the translator employed a phonetic adaptation of Sino-Vietnamese pronunciation. Though written in the Quoc Ngu script (the Vietnamese writing system using Latin letters), the pronunciation remains Sino-Vietnamese. This approach preserves the cultural connotations of the original names more directly than any explanatory translation, achieving the greatest degree of cultural fidelity.

When handling the official title "总兵" (General), the translator also employed the Sino-Vietnamese term "tổng binh" (General), combining it with the surname to form "Lý tổng binh." This ensures the accurate conveyance of the character's social status. Throughout the translation, the translator refrained from extensive alterations, preserving the original sentence structure of "Lý Tĩnh, Lý tổng binh..." (Li Jing, General Li Jing...) This structure fully adheres to the formal ancient Chinese practice of juxtaposing "surname + given name" with "surname + official title." Paired with the film's formal introduction of Lý Tĩnh, it effectively conveys the intended solemnity and formality of the original sentence. Simultaneously, the translation remains concise and uncomplicated, ensuring a smooth viewing experience for audiences.

When translating "陈塘关" (Chen Tang Guan), the translator employed a combination of transliteration and interpretation. Transliterating "陈塘" (Chen Tang) as "Trần Đường" preserves the cultural essence of the name. To enhance Vietnamese audience comprehension, the translator prefixed "Trần Đường" with the Vietnamese native term

"ái" (meaning "pass" or "fortified pass"), forming "ái Trần Đường." This seemingly minor addition proved essential. For Vietnamese audiences unfamiliar with Chinese culture, "Trần Đường" might have remained an obscure transliteration. However, the inclusion of "ái"—a generic term for "pass" or "fortress"—immediately clarified its meaning as a strategic location, significantly lowering comprehension barriers and ensuring narrative clarity. Merely transliterating "陈塘关" (Chen Tang Guan) as "Trần Đường Quan" would only convey to Vietnamese audiences that this is a location, without providing insight into its geographical significance.

Example 2 Original: Pain in the ass

Translation: Đau chết lão nương rồi.

This line is spoken by Lady Yin to the midwife as she sweats profusely in labor. "痛死老娘了" (Pain in the ass) is a highly colloquial expression in Chinese. In contemporary speech—especially when uttered by a martial figure like Lady Yin, Nezha's mother—the term "老娘" (Lao niang) functions as an informal, coarse, slightly brash, and self-deprecating first-person pronoun. It instantly highlights the speaker's assertive personality, impatience, or the loss of composure brought on by pain. The translator primarily employed a literal translation + phonetic adaptation approach here. "老娘" (Lao niang) was rendered as "lão nương," an extremely formal and archaic Sino-Vietnamese term literally meaning "old woman/old mother." It has virtually disappeared from modern Vietnamese daily speech, appearing only in rare historical texts or highly formal references to elderly women from antiquity. Using this term for Lady Yin, who is enduring the excruciating pain of childbirth, is clearly inappropriate—it transforms a vivid, emotionally charged colloquial complaint into a stiff, odd, almost pedantic archaic self-reference. The original line "痛死老娘了" (literally: "The pain is killing my old mother!") instantly and successfully establishes Lady Yin's bold, straightforward, and unpretentious character. In contrast, "Đau chết lão nương rồi" leaves audiences perplexed: why would a character in such agony suddenly adopt such an archaic, solemn self-reference? This translation strips the original line of its vividness, humor, and character charm, rendering the emotional expression stiff and distant. It risks provoking unintentional laughter from the audience, undermining the scene's authenticity and emotional immersion.

The author believes translating it as "Đau chết mẹ rồi!" is more appropriate. "Mẹ" (mom/old lady) is the most common colloquial self-reference in Vietnamese, used to intensify emphasis. It's extremely common in Vietnamese complaints, anger, pain, or casual speech, precisely conveying the original line's intense emotion and rough tone. The character's personality is instantly brought to life, and the audience understands it without any barriers.

4.3 Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms

Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms primarily refer to Chinese idioms, phrases, and proverbs that embody distinctive Chinese characteristics.[9] These expressions encapsulate unique Chinese linguistic habits, rhetorical styles, and philosophical concepts. When selecting specific translation examples, the author primarily considered three levels:

First, the term itself carries significant cultural weight or widespread recognition, embodying unique spiritual concepts or collective consciousness within Chinese culture. For instance, the phrase "我命由我不由天" (My fate is in my own hands, not heaven's) encapsulates the core ideology of resisting predestination and asserting individual agency. Second, the phrase serves a crucial narrative function in the film—whether characterizing a protagonist or advancing the plot. For instance, the colloquialism delivered by Taiyi Zhenren vividly mirrors his witty and carefree persona. Third, the translation demonstrates a distinct strategic orientation during the Vietnamese adaptation process—either leaning toward domestication to align with Vietnamese audience expectations or employing foreignization to preserve the cultural distinctiveness of the original text.

Example 1 Original: My fate is in my own hands, not heaven's.

Translation: Mệnh ta do ta không do trời.

In translating this sentence, the translator primarily employed a free translation approach, incorporating Sino-Vietnamese terms for certain vocabulary. Translating "命" (fate) as "Mệnh" represents an exceptionally precise choice of Sino-Vietnamese terminology. "Mệnh" directly corresponds to the Chinese "命" (fate) in Vietnamese, signifying not only life but also destiny and divine mandate, carrying identical philosophical and metaphysical connotations with fully equivalent cultural weight. Translating "天" (heaven) as "trời" employs a domestication strategy. Here, the Chinese "天" (heaven) functions as a philosophical concept—denoting heavenly mandate, the Supreme Being, or sovereignty. Rather than using the more formal Sino-Vietnamese term "thiên," the translator selected the native Vietnamese word "trời," which in daily life signifies both the sky and the supreme ruler. This word plays an almost identical role in Vietnamese folk beliefs and proverbs as the Chinese "天" (e.g., "Ơn trời" meaning "thank heaven," "Trời phật" meaning "heavenly Buddha"). This choice transforms the concept of "heaven" from an abstract philosophical level to a more familiar folk-level understanding for Vietnamese audiences. By adopting this translation strategy, the translator significantly "Vietnamizes" a proverb deeply rooted in Chinese Daoist thought (emphasizing human agency) and a spirit of resistance. Vietnamese audiences hearing it would not perceive it as a foreign adage but rather as a powerful declaration of life belonging to their own linguistic and cultural context. This avoids potential comprehension barriers inherent in literal translation, aligning with the subtitle translation's purpose—effectively conveying information for audience understanding.

Structurally, the original contrasting phrase "由我...不由天" (by me... not by heaven) is rendered as "do ta... không do trời." The translator employs "ta"—a first-person pronoun common in classical poetry and proverbs—rather than the modern colloquial "tôi." "Ta" carries a classical, solemn, even solitary tone that perfectly matches Nezha's resolute defiance against fate in this scene. The entire sentence features compact syllables and stark contrast, delivering a powerful, resonant cadence when spoken aloud. It perfectly replicates the original's rhythmic intensity and declarative force.

Example 2 Original: When joy comes, the spirit is refreshed.

Translation: Người gặp chuyện vui thì tinh thần thoải mái.

"人逢喜事精神爽" (When joy comes, spirits soar) is a widely circulated Chinese proverb, meaning that when one encounters celebratory events, they naturally feel uplifted and energized. At this moment, Taiyi Zhenren had just received the promise from Yuanshi Tianzun: if he could cultivate the Spirit Pearl into a human, he would earn the final seat among the Twelve Golden Immortals. In translating this sentence, the translator primarily employed a free translation approach. "Người" (person) and "tinh thần" (spirit) are Sino-Vietnamese terms, directly corresponding to their Vietnamese equivalents; "gặp chuyện vui" (encountering joyful events) employs natural Vietnamese expression to convey the meaning of "逢喜事" (facing happy occasions); translating "精神爽" (the spirit is refreshed) as "thoải mái" is an exceptionally apt choice, as "精神爽" (the spirit is refreshed) lacks a precise fixed equivalent in Vietnamese—a literal translation would risk ambiguity or absurdity. "Thoải mái" is the most natural and frequent expression for conveying feelings of ease and relaxation. It accurately conveys the emotional nuance of "爽" (feel well) and clearly establishes the causal relationship through the conjunction "thì"—feeling good because of good fortune. This allows Vietnamese audiences to experience similar psychological resonance and emotional connection as the original language audience.

Proverbs are the crystallization of a nation's wisdom, and the key to translating them lies in conveying that wisdom rather than merely replicating the words. Free translation repackages the universal life experience embodied in the Chinese phrase "人逢喜事精神爽" (When joy comes, spirits soar) using familiar cognitive frameworks within Vietnamese culture. This allows audiences to perceive it as "a truth that exists within their own culture," rather than a forced imposition of foreign culture. Such domestication more readily evokes emotional resonance, enabling viewers to better grasp the meaning conveyed by the dialogue during the film.

4.4 Religious Culture-Specific Terms

Religious Culture-Specific Terms reflect the traditional religious characteristics of a specific linguistic community, typically embodying the religious beliefs of a particular ethnic group.[10] Religious Culture-Specific Terms are critical elements requiring careful handling in cross-cultural communication. In the film *Ne Zha: The Demon Boy*, the author selected representative Taoist cultural load words for analysis based on their central role in the film's narrative and world-building, as well as their accessibility to Vietnamese audiences. These terms do not exist in isolation but are intricately woven around characters' identities, abilities, and destinies. For instance, Ne Zha's magical artifacts—the "风火轮" (Wind-Fire Wheels) and the "乾坤圈" (Heaven-Earth Ring)—directly embody his combat traits as a "魔童" (demon child) and the Taoist culture of magical treasures; Tai Yi Zhenren's "山河社稷图" (Map of Mountains and Rivers) and "指点江山笔" (Pen for Commanding the Realm) vividly showcase the mystical functions of Taoist "magical artifacts"; while spells like "变身术" (transformation techniques) and "障眼法" (illusionary arts), along with incantations such as "急急如律令" (Hasten as the Law Commands) and "天劫咒" (Heavenly Tribulation Spell), serve not

only as pivotal plot drivers but also as direct manifestations of Taoist rituals and cosmology within the narrative. Furthermore, terms like "仙气" (celestial energy), "魔气" (demonic energy), and "下凡" (descending to the mortal realm) establish the film's fundamental logical framework of the tripartite opposition-unity between the human, divine, and demonic realms. These words were selected for analysis precisely because they epitomize Taoist cultural concepts while posing significant "cultural gap" challenges in translation.

During translation, given the distinct cultural specificity and religious connotations of such terms, translators predominantly adopt a foreignization strategy to preserve the original form and content characteristics as much as possible. Particularly when handling Taoist vocabulary, Sino-Vietnamese transliteration serves as the primary method to retain the cultural imprint of the source language in the translation. Conversely, the scope for domestication is relatively limited, primarily due to the irreplaceable and culturally embedded nature of religiously charged terms. From a Skopos Theory, translating religiously charged cultural terms primarily serves cultural transmission—striving to ensure Vietnamese audiences grasp both the narrative and the underlying religious and cultural context.

Example 1 Original: Hurry, as the law commands!

Translation: *Lập tức mau tuân lệnh!*

"急急如律令" (Hurry, as the law commands) originates from the Han Dynasty official phrase "如律令" (as the law decrees), meaning immediate execution according to legal orders. Later adopted by Taoism, it became a fixed formula in talismans and spells to command spirits and activate magical power. Its meaning can be understood as "execute swiftly according to the decree," embodying both authority and urgency. The translation "*Lập tức mau tuân lệnh!*" employs a blend of interpretive and literal rendering. "*lập tức*" (immediately) and "*mau*" (quickly) together convey "急急" (hurry), using repetition to amplify urgency; "*tuân lệnh*" (obey the command) directly conveys the core meaning of "submission to orders"; throughout, the translation avoids complex terminology, opting instead for plain, colloquial vocabulary. This allows Vietnamese audiences unfamiliar with Taoist culture to immediately grasp the incantation's function within the narrative—namely, to express "immediate execution of the command." This approach lowers the comprehension barrier for religiously charged terms, ensuring smooth narrative progression. However, the colloquial translation inevitably dilutes the original's religious overtones, transforming it from a Taoist phrase with specific origins and fixed structure into a common, urgency-driven spoken command. The mystique and solemnity inherent to Taoism are thus partially diminished.

Compared to English translations that often rely on imprecise methods like combining onomatopoeia with free translation (e.g., "fast fast biu biu"), the Vietnamese translation conveys similar concepts with greater accuracy and naturalness. This stems primarily from the deep cultural and historical ties between China and Vietnam, which share significant commonalities in linguistic structure and cultural cognition. In contrast, the cultural differences between China and the West are more pronounced, making it harder to find exact equivalents in translation and sometimes resulting in awkward or confusing outcomes. Thus, cultural affinity provides a smoother foundation for linguistic conversion between Chinese and Vietnamese.

Example 2 Original: Heaven and Earth boundless, the circle of Càn Khôn.

Translation: Thiên địa vô lượng Càn Khôn khuyn.

"天地无量乾坤圈" (Heaven and Earth, boundless; the Càn Khôn ring) is a mantra used by the Taoist master Taiyi Zhenren in the film to unlock or activate Nezha's magical artifact, the Càn Khôn ring. Structurally, "天地" (Heaven and Earth) signifies the cosmos or entire world, while "无量" (boundless) denotes immeasurable vastness—a term frequently used in Buddhist and Taoist praise. "乾坤" (Qiankun), originating from the <I Ching>, combines "乾" (qián, Heaven) and "坤" (kūn, Earth), symbolizing the fundamental opposing yet unified forces of yin and yang in the universe. It is also extended to mean the world or the cosmos. Thus, within its cultural context, the entire incantation can be understood as "endowed with the boundless power of Heaven and Earth (to bless this ring)," embodying profound Taoist ritualism and cosmological vision. This incantation possesses ritualistic significance, serving as an artistic manifestation of Taoist culture within the narrative.

In the Vietnamese translation, this phrase is rendered as "Thiên địa vô lượng Càn Khôn khuyn." This translation employs a combined strategy of literal translation and phonetic adaptation: "Thiên địa" (Heaven and Earth) and "vô lượng" (boundless) are rendered using Sino-Vietnamese terms, preserving the original semantic content. Since these terms have established recognition in Vietnamese Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary, readers encounter no comprehension barriers. "Càn Khôn" (Qiankun), as a core philosophical and religious concept, is fully transplanted through Sino-Vietnamese transliteration to preserve its sound, form, and meaning, ensuring reading fluency. However, relying solely on Sino-Vietnamese phonetics struggles to fully convey the I Ching and Taoist connotations behind "乾坤" (Qiankun); "khuyn" corresponds to "circle," similarly using transliteration to denote the ritual object's name, ensuring viewers can directly recognize it. While the translation of the entire sentence cannot achieve a 100% interpretation of the religious culture it embodies, considering the readability of subtitles for the audience, it strikes a balance between foreignization and cultural acceptability.

Overall, the Vietnamese subtitles for Ne Zha 1 are largely successful. Translators employed targeted strategies for culturally loaded terms based on context and audience comprehension. For Social Culture-Specific Terms, the translator predominantly employed Sino-Vietnamese terms or combined phonetic transcription with free translation, prioritizing the accurate conveyance of character identities, social relationships, and honorifics. This approach enabled Vietnamese audiences to grasp character dynamics even without full cultural context. For linguistically and culturally loaded terms, the translation strategy leaned heavily toward free translation. This approach demonstrated clear advantages in conveying emotional nuances and advancing the narrative rhythm, effectively reducing comprehension barriers while enhancing viewing fluidity and emotional resonance. For Religious Culture-Specific Terms, transliteration and Sino-Vietnamese terms dominate. This approach effectively preserves the cultural characteristics of Chinese mythology when handling mythical figures, ritual objects, and Taoist concepts, contributing to the film's overarching worldview. However, from a purpose-oriented perspective emphasizing that "every translation act should serve a specific purpose," certain shortcomings remain in the film's subtitling. Overreliance on literal or

phonetic translations for certain culturally loaded terms, without sufficient contextual adaptation (e.g., transliterating "老娘" as "lǎo nǚ"), preserves cultural form but weakens the emotional tension of the source language, undermining the character's linguistic style. These issues reflect a lack of precision in aligning subtitle translation with specific objectives across diverse contexts.

5 Conclusion

As Chinese film and television works increasingly reach international audiences, the role of film subtitling in cross-cultural communication grows ever more significant. As a Vietnamese-subtitled adaptation of a Chinese mythological animated film, the translation of numerous culturally loaded terms in *Ne Zha* directly impacts Vietnamese viewers' comprehension of the film's content and cultural implications. This study employs Skopos Theory as its theoretical framework, analyzing the Vietnamese subtitles of *Ne Zha*. It categorizes the culturally loaded terms within the film and focuses on examining the translation strategies for Social Culture-Specific Terms, Religious Culture-Specific Terms, and Linguistic Culture-Specific Terms. The study finds that the Vietnamese subtitles for *Ne Zha* largely achieve their core translation purpose: conveying the essential messages of Chinese mythological culture to Vietnamese audiences while ensuring the film's successful commercial distribution in the Vietnamese market. However, to further enhance Vietnamese viewers' comprehension of the entire film, more effort is needed in translating certain nuanced terms to make them more "authentic" and "localized."

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