



Slang Translation Strategies in Audiovisual Contexts: A Case Study of *Zootopia 2*

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Abstract. Cross-cultural exchanges have grown increasingly frequent alongside the booming development of audiovisual media industries. Slang pragmatic equivalence in film translation has thus become a heated topic in contemporary translation studies. This paper selects the animated film *Zootopia 2* as its research material and analyzes slang translation in the film thoroughly. The whole analysis follows the theory of domestication translation strategy. Domestication is indeed the main strategy for translating slang in films and TV shows, and translators make slight changes to the original expressions so that the target audience can understand more easily, which in turn helps viewers follow the film content more naturally. Translating film slang requires the flexible use of various strategies; professional translators make context-appropriate choices regarding the plot situation. The first and most important principle is to preserve the meaning of the original slang accurately. Moreover, the target language should be natural, fluent, and culturally apt. Hence, well-rounded translation optimization yields the greatest practical communication value in film and television translation.

Keywords: Slang, Domestication, *Zootopia 2*

1 Introduction

Digital media has been advancing pretty fast these days, and as that happens, animated films have slowly become an important way for different cultures to communicate with each other. A good example here would be *Zootopia 2*. Its box office performance around the world is actually quite decent, and that kind of success shows how animated movies are getting more and more influential when it comes to cross-cultural communication. At the same time, audiovisual media keep growing and changing, so research on film and television translation has also been getting more in-depth over time. The focus of this research has shifted. In the past, people paid more attention to the technical side of things, but now the field has expanded into areas like pragmatics, humor, and culture [1]. If it looks at things from a bibliometrics angle, audiovisual translation, which is a branch of translatology, has been developing pretty quickly. Its research topics cover several aspects. One is subtitles, another is dubbing, and there is also media accessibility, plus communication and audience acceptance [2]. Besides that, audiovis-

ual translation itself is a type of multimodal translation, meaning it has to make language, images, and sounds all work together in a coordinated way [3]. In this whole process, dubbing translation works by combining language with voice. That way, the way characters express themselves can better match the acceptance habits of the target language audience [4].

Animated film dialogue is, by nature, very colloquial, and slang forms a major part of how characters speak. It is important to recognize that slang carries specific emotions and has clear social and cultural connotations. Therefore, a word-for-word translation will fail to capture the real pragmatic meaning or the stylistic flair of the original language [5]. Hence, professional translators must adjust the translation according to context and target culture. Given that this kind of targeted adjustment leads to pragmatic equivalence in cross-cultural translation, it is natural to note that most academic research today deals with general film translation or subtitle translation theories, but there is still a clear gap: no systematic research has been done on dubbing slang for animated films, and even fewer studies compare the original English subtitles directly with the localized Chinese dubbing texts. As there is a clear gap to fill, the paper uses *Zootopia 2* as an excellent case study to investigate the differences between slang expressions in the original English scripts and the Chinese dubbed versions, then applies domestication translation theory to systematically classify the practical translation methods into four categories: using an idiom or proverb, using a colloquial substitute, free translation, and cultural adaptation. Based on this, the paper naturally and logically derives general rules for translating slang. Considering that the purpose here is to provide a practical reference for audiovisual translation in cross-cultural communication.

2 Slang in Films: Concepts and Translation Challenges

2.1 The Concept of Slang

Slang plays several roles in daily communication; its value centers on expressing emotion and showing personality. Speakers use it to make feelings more direct and add humor in a very natural way in conversation [6]. In animated films, the role of slang is not limited to simple interaction between characters; its importance lies in shaping character image and enriching dialogue, it makes the story more vivid, and it also improves the viewing experience [7].

2.2 Presentation of Slang in Films

In an audiovisual context, meaning is built through multiple channels; language, sound, and visual elements work together, emotion and personality are presented at the same time, and the overall effect is more direct and complete [8]. The slang use of Nick Wilde in *Zootopia 2* shows this clearly; his casual lines are often paired with rich facial expressions and body movements, the language and performance match each other, and his witty and relaxed personality becomes easy to recognize. The meaning of film slang does not rely on words alone; it is supported by visual and sound elements, which extend what language cannot fully express, helping the audience understand characters more deeply. They also make relationships between characters clearer.

2.3 Challenges in Slang Translation

Slang serves an indispensable function in making film dialogue lively and vivid, but it is well established that translating slang from one culture to another presents serious difficulties: most slang expressions have cultural meanings and pragmatic functions that are specific to the language in which they appear, so finding an exact equivalent in another language is often difficult, if not impossible. Since there are no completely equivalent expressions in different languages, blind literal conversion is very likely to cause semantic deviation and expression ambiguity in translation practice [9]. Moreover, strong colloquialism is a defining feature of film slang; improper translation processing will break the stylistic unity of film dialogues and destroy the authenticity, naturalness, and affective force of character oral expression [10]. Since most film slang serves implicit pragmatic functions such as humor, irony, and wordplay, and because these subtle linguistic effects are extremely difficult to reproduce by simple cross-linguistic conversion, it is clear that film slang is always used in connection with screen actions, character intonations, and plot contexts. Its full meaning can only be recovered from the integrated multimodal information. Since the comprehensive expression effects are the ultimate goal of slang translation, it is clear that translators engaged in slang translation practice must have two well-developed abilities: first, knowing the exact lexical and semantic meanings of the original slang, and second, adapting expressions to fit the linguistic habits and cultural cognition of the target audience. Only thus can the semantics, pragmatics, and emotional effects be properly balanced. As the domestication strategy offers a very good solution to the problems mentioned earlier, it uses familiar local expressions addressed to the target audience, hence it removes cross-cultural understanding barriers, preserves the original dialogue's humor, and produces a translation that is both natural and fluent.

3 Case Analysis

3.1 Method

Film slang translation faces inherent cross-linguistic and cross-cultural obstacles. This research takes animated film English slang as the research object. It establishes an analysis corpus based on original film dialogues and official Mandarin dubbing texts. Typical slang samples are screened out for the targeted case study.

The research framework combines Peter Newmark's communicative translation theory and Lawrence Venuti's domestication strategy. It realizes systematic classification and induction of film slang translation methods. Domestication adopted in this research refers to target-culture-oriented translation guidance. Translators revise original foreign linguistic expressions. The revision fits the local audience's language logic, cultural cognition, and viewing expectations. The core goal of domestication is to eliminate foreign translation traces. It optimizes audience reading fluency and viewing smoothness. Different from pure text translation, audiovisual slang domestication covers multiple dimensions. It includes basic linguistic conversion, as well as reconstruction of pragmatic functions and cultural connotations.

This study divides domestication translation into four specific operational types: idiom or proverb substitution, colloquial substitution, free translation, and cultural adaptation. Mixed research methods are adopted in the whole analytical process. Qualitative analysis sorts out typical slang translation cases and summarizes mainstream strategy types. Comparative analysis compares source texts and translated texts from semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic dimensions. Comprehensive case induction finally summarizes the application characteristics and scenario rules of different domestication methods. It further clarifies the internal operating mechanism of domestication in audiovisual slang translation.

3.2 Results

Corpus-based systematic analysis verifies domestication as the dominant strategy for audiovisual slang translation. The four specific translation methods show different application frequencies and functional advantages. Each method adapts to unique plot and dialogue contexts.

Idiom or Proverb Substitution. Idiom and proverb substitution links English slang with familiar Chinese idioms. The focus is on quick cultural fit and natural expression. This approach follows Lawrence Venuti's domestication. The foreign flavor in the source text is toned down. Viewers can understand it more easily and accept it faster. The case of a one-hit wonder rendered as "撞了一次大运" shows how it works. The slang refers to success that comes by chance and does not last long. The Chinese idiom conveys luck and accident in a direct way. The key point is functional effect, which aligns with Eugene Nida's functional equivalence. The audience in the target culture can get a similar response to that of the original audience. This method lowers the effort needed to understand the line. It also makes the content easier to relate to. The limitation is also clear. Too many idioms can blur the original cultural traits of the slang. This reflects the trade-off within domestication translation.

Colloquial Substitution. Colloquial substitution means replacing the original slang with natural, everyday spoken Chinese. It is one of the most common methods in audiovisual dubbing. This approach follows Lawrence Venuti's fluency-oriented domestication. The focus is on making the lines sound natural and easy to accept. The translated dialogue fits daily speaking habits. Viewers can understand it without effort. Examples in *Zootopia 2* show this clearly. The slang word bail is rendered as "撤", a simple and direct way to express leaving quickly. Let's hit it becomes "走着", which matches how people start an action in casual speech. Order up is turned into "上菜了", a common phrase in restaurant settings. These choices avoid rigid literal translation. They follow Chinese oral expression patterns more closely. This idea is close to Eugene Nida's audience response theory. The key lies in acceptability and naturalness. Colloquial substitution makes dialogue smoother. It also helps build vivid character voices. At the same time, some cultural nuance and rhetorical flavor in the original slang may be reduced.

Free Translation. Free translation puts meaning first, not form. It aims at clear communication. It follows a domestication approach. Many slang examples in the film show this. The legal slang *railroaded* is not taken in its literal sense. It is rendered as "拖下了水". This highlights forced involvement in trouble. The safety term *choking hazard* is turned into "容易噎死". The wording is direct. The audience can understand it at once. The popular slang "on point" is paraphrased as the daily comment "挺不错" to deliver a general affirmative meaning. These translations break the bondage of original linguistic forms. They accurately output core pragmatic meanings of slang. The processing mode complies with Nida's functional equivalence theory. It pursues the closest and most natural target-language expression effect. It also practices Venuti's domestication core idea of prioritizing readability. Free translation greatly improves the information transmission efficiency of film dialogues. It cannot retain the original slang's metaphorical connotations and unique stylistic features. Such functional compromise becomes the inevitable cost of improving translation fluency.

Creative Adaptation. Cultural creative adaptation refers to secondary creation based on a thorough understanding of the original slang. Translators reconstruct linguistic expressions to restore lost pragmatic and rhetorical effects in cross-cultural conversion. This method makes full use of target-language cultural resources. It reconstructs expression modes to realize equivalent pragmatic feedback in different cultural contexts. Several representative cases reflect the value of creative adaptation. The repetitive slang "yakety-yak" describing excessive gossip is localized as the typical Chinese cultural expression "长舌妇". The internet slang "truth bomb" is creatively converted into the domestic popular expression "独家爆料". The leisure slang "veg out" is simplified and adapted to the daily relaxation expression "放松一下". The translation of the rhythmic sentence "Takes two to tango, but a threesome to be some" stands out as a typical creative adaptation case. The original English sentence adopts parallel structure, rhythm design and pun rhetoric. It combines "tango", "threesome", and "some" to form humorous rhetorical effects. No corresponding linguistic form exists in the Chinese language system. Translators thus abandon word-for-word translation. They reconstruct parallel rhythmic structure in Chinese, translating it as "双人才能跳探戈, 三人才能成气候". The added cultural word "成气候" does not appear in the original text. It extends the original semantic meaning with local cultural connotations. It converts original English verbal wordplay into a Chinese metaphorical expression of collective success. This processing perfectly reproduces the original rhetorical force and thematic connotation.

Creative adaptation fully practices functional equivalence and domestication translation theories. It significantly enhances translation expressiveness and audience acceptance. However, high-degree creative reconstruction may cause subtle deviation from original linguistic details and nuance. The method puts forward higher requirements for translators' bilingual ability and cross-cultural literacy.

Overall, audiovisual slang translation presents a hierarchical collaborative mode. Colloquial substitution and free semantic translation form the basic mainstream translation methods. Idiom substitution and cultural creative adaptation serve as supplementary optimized strategies. The combined application of multiple methods guarantees

accurate information transmission. It also retains original linguistic style and partial cultural connotations, forming a complete communication-oriented translation system.

4 Inspiration

Domestication dominates modern audiovisual slang translation practice. Different domestication methods carry differentiated functional positioning and applicable scenarios. Clarifying the internal logic of strategy selection can form operable guiding principles for practical translation. This chapter analyzes slang translation rules from strategy selection, audience orientation, and cultural adaptation dimensions, with theoretical support from classic translation theories.

4.1 Strategy Selection Principles

Fixed translation strategies cannot apply to all film dialogue scenarios. Translators need dynamic, flexible selection according to the specific plot context. They must guarantee the basic semantic accuracy of the original slang. As they should take target-language naturalness and audience acceptability as their primary considerations, it is natural and logical to link this practical rule to the core requirements of Skopos Theory's skopos rule and coherence rule: audience viewing and understanding needs should dominate the choice of translation methods [11]. Moreover, film context, character setting, and communicative purpose all influence translation strategy formulation, so flexible strategy selection tailored to specific communicative goals has become a well-established conclusion in current slang translation research.

4.2 Audience-Oriented Approach

Audiovisual translation is closely tied to the audience. The key point is how well the target viewers can understand and accept the dialogue. Translators adjust the original expressions to match local language habits, cultural background, and everyday thinking, so the meaning can be received more directly. Film translation works in a real-time viewing context. The audience cannot stop and reflect on each line; they need to understand the dialogue instantly, which makes readability and clarity more important than strict word-for-word matching. Slang translation follows the same logic. What matters most is whether the line sounds natural and easy to process, rather than whether each word is formally equivalent. The role of simple and localized expressions mainly centers on audience understanding; many subtitle and dubbing studies point to the same pattern. These expressions make it easier to follow the story and keep the viewing process smooth; the overall viewing experience is also improved [12].

4.3 Cultural Adaptation Path

Slang translation often faces cultural gaps. The key point is to avoid misunderstanding and keep the meaning clear across cultures. Translators need to notice how cultures interpret expressions differently. They adjust wording based on that difference. Film slang often carries cultural references and social meaning. Direct translation can feel unnatural in the target language. It may also confuse viewers. In audiovisual translation, more flexible methods are often used, such as localization, replacement, and cultural

substitution. These methods keep the core meaning. They also make the dialogue easier to accept in the target culture. Cultural adaptation is widely discussed in audiovisual translation studies [13]. Strategy choice in slang translation is closely related to context. The focus is on meaning accuracy, natural expression, and cultural accessibility. This view matches the ideas of Skopos Theory and communicative translation approaches. It also reflects common practice in audiovisual translation research.

5 Conclusion

This study takes the animated film *Zootopia 2* as the research object. It compares the English subtitles and the Chinese dubbing version. The focus is on domestication in slang translation and its role in communication. The analysis shows a clear tendency toward domestication. Translators often reshape expressions to match Chinese language habits and thinking patterns. This helps the audience understand lines quickly during viewing. Different strategies serve different functions. Colloquial substitution and free translation focus on clarity and naturalness. Idiom or proverb substitution and creative adaptation keep cultural meaning and expressive effect. Film translation is audience-oriented. Viewers have limited time to process dialogue. Simple and familiar expressions work better in this context. This also aligns with functional equivalence and communicative translation approaches. There is still a balance problem in translation practice. When language becomes more fluent and easier to accept, some cultural features of the source text may be reduced. The balance between cultural retention and communication efficiency remains an important issue in audiovisual translation. Future research can use more film materials. It can also combine multimodal analysis. This may help explain slang translation in different audiovisual contexts more clearly.

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