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Translation of Xiqu Subtitles

A Case Study of *Silang Visits His Mother*

Abstract

This article presents a case study that examines the challenges and solutions encountered in the translation of Chinese Xiqu subtitles, using *Silang Visits His Mother* as the corpus. Building upon the model proposed by Qian and Feng (2021), the study investigates solutions applicable to translating Chinese Xiqu, finding that Xiqu subtitle translation must streamline the language to ensure that audiences can understand the important content in a short period of time. This requires 1) omitting some details and emphasizing core meanings to keep subtitles concise and clear. Therefore, omission is often used in subtitle translation. 2) Additionally, enhancing the audience's grasp of the script involves solutions such as introducing punctuation or changing semantic focus to highlight specific aspects. 3) When dealing with cultural-bounded terms, it is necessary to employ cultural correspondence to resonate with the audience's cultural context. This research contributes to the advancement of subtitling translation practices in Xiqu, shedding light on effective translation solutions tailored to preserve the essence of these performances for diverse audiences.
Keywords: subtitle translation, Xiqu, translation solutions

1   Introduction

Xiqu[1], as an essential component of China's traditional culture, has garnered significant attention and appreciation worldwide. This unique form of performing arts not only represents Chinese culture but also holds profound historical and cultural significance, which can be seen as the representative of ancient Chinese culture for western audiences. However, the research on Xiqu translation remains limited.[2] During overseas performances, Xiqu typically utilizes original Chinese texts to preserve the original essence of the Chinese lyrics, coupled with English subtitles to aid the audience in comprehending the storyline and cultural nuances. Subtitles specifically refer to text captions displayed at the bottom of a screen that transcribe the spoken dialogue or narration, while surtitles are supertitles projected above a stage or screen, used primarily in opera houses and theaters to translate lyrics and dialogue for the audience during a performance. The difference between subtitle and surtitles is that unlike subtitles fixed on the screen, surtitles are displayed separately from the visual media and can be positioned for

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[1]   Known as Chinese opera, but it is better to use "Xiqu" as the name because of the specificity of this kind of art (more to see Zhu 2023).

[2]   Research on Xiqu has mainly focused on literary value (Su 2016), the Xiqu requisites (Song 2002), dissemination of Xiqu (Zhao 2001, Wang 2005), and so on.

optimal viewing[3]. Here, that I use subtitles but not surtitles is because this corpus that was studied comes from an Xiqu video, but not a live stage performance, and the subtitles are embedded at the bottom of the video, playing along with the actor's singing.

This article aims to explore the challenges and complexities of translating Xiqu subtitles, using the subtitle translation of *Silang Visits His Mother* as a case study to conduct an exploration of this aspect of Xiqu subtitle translation. Xiqu subtitle translation seems to be a specialized research aspect, but it still elucidates the various problems faced by translators when translating traditional Chinese Xiqu into English. By highlighting these various translation problems within this framework, it may be said that subtitle translation focuses on the translation solution in general. Within the framework of subtitle translation, there exists a constraint of limited time and text space, for subtitles, it is said that the space which we have in our translation is limited to 2 lines of subtitles, each line cannot contain more than 35 characters (i.e. any letter, symbol or space). The subtitle (formed by 2 lines) can have up to 70 characters, so translators must be particularly attentive to their translation decisions. Therefore, the reason for the translator's decision-making should not only be the linguistic problem, i.e., the various problems in translation, but should also take into account the limitations of space and time, that is to say, the translator should have a double sense of decision-making. This complexity underscores the importance of researching Xiqu subtitle translation.

To understand the special status of Xiqu within the genre of visual performance, first, it should be made clear that Xiqu, on the one hand, and film and television series on the other, are two different performance modes. Film and television series performances rely heavily on visual elements, and storytelling is conveyed not only through actors' dialogues but also through actors' screen styling, background music, and complex scene transitions. In contrast, Xiqu stages are typically very simple constructed, often featuring just a table and two chairs. The narrative heavily relies on actor performances and lines, and the musical accompaniment in Xiqu, compared to film and television series, serves primarily to control the rhythm of the actors' singing. Additionally, in film and television series, characters often have internal psychological activities that are typically presented through voice-overs. In Xiqu, psychological activities are expressed by the actors standing at the front or side of the stage, facing the audience, and expressing them through singing or speaking. Therefore, in light of such significant differences between these performance types, does subtitle translation in Xiqu differ in translation solutions from other genres like film and television series?

In this article, firstly, I will review the literature on subtitle translation; secondly, I will introduce the theoretical background of the topic; and then, there will be a comprehensive overview with the examples that the problems should be face in translation of Xiqu subtitles; and finally, I will evaluate my results.

2   Literature review

Low (2002) argues that in opera performances, music takes precedence, and surtitles must remain relatively unobtrusive. Unlike film subtitles, which are overlaid at the bottom of the screen due to the extensive verbal content in films, displaying elaborate subtitles on the opera stage can distract the audience, detracting from the overall viewing experience. In this article,

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[3]   https://www.captitles.com/library/what-is-the-difference-between-subtitles-and-surtitles
(accessed 14 November 2024)

my research focuses on subtitles embedded within videos of Chinese Xiqu, rather than surtitles used in live stage performances. As such, they are more akin to film subtitles rather than European opera surtitles. Therefore, in the literature review, I primarily analyze subtitle translation and film subtitles.

According to Gottlieb (1998), the subtitling or "captions" processes involve transcribing film and television dialogue and presenting it simultaneously on the screen. He argues that in the realm of films and television programs, translators must contend with four simultaneous channels: a. The verbal auditory channel, encompassing dialogue, background voices, and lyrics. b. The non-verbal auditory channel, comprising music and natural sound. c. The verbal visual channel, including superimposed titles and written signs on the screen. d. The non-verbal visual channel, involving picture composition and flow (Gottlieb 1998). Díaz-Cintas proposes that the prevailing practice for subtitling is predominantly guided by the "six-second rule". This rule dictates that an optimal subtitle duration involves two complete lines, each containing approximately 35 characters—adding up to a total of 70 characters—ensuring comfortable readability within a six-second timeframe (Díaz-Cintas 2012).

Subtitle translation is firstly about the translation of language pairs, and secondly about the fact that subtitles appear on the screen for the audience to watch and assist them in understanding the content of the performance. Therefore, subtitle translation is often analyzed in terms of a certain language pair, for example, Chinese–English pair or English-French pair. In subtitle translation, it is essential to consider specific genres such as film subtitles, conference subtitles, drama subtitles, and so on. Such kinds of translation strategies of subtitle translation have been studied by many researchers (Ma 1997, Sanchez 2004, Ji and Song 2007). As the literature indicates, the majority of research on subtitle translation focuses on film texts (Kapsaskis 2008, Baños 2017, Taylor 2000).

Ban (2023) takes the film and television drama *Downton Abbey* as an example and explores the principles and strategies of subtitle translation by using the functional theories of translation. She argues that the subtitle translation of film and television dramas is instantaneous, colloquial and comprehensive. She proposes, with the help of examples and analysis, that subtitle translation can be used in the strategies of deletion, addition, substitution, and paraphrase to achieve functional equivalence, so as to enable audiences to appreciate the different cultural customs on the basis of their understanding of the plots.

Chai et al. (2022) analyzed how to translate subtitles from Chinese to English in cultural film and television dramas using some subtitling techniques of Tomaszkiewicz (2010). They argue that the biggest translation challenges in film and television dramas are technical, cultural, and linguistic challenges. Based on the Chinese-to-English subtitling of a Chinese cultural program, *The Art of Paper Cutting*, they find that the most appropriate translation solutions in subtitling are omission, direct transfer, equivalence, and adaptation. They believe that these translation solutions can also be applied in the subtitle translation of other similar film and television dramas.

Zhang et al. (2023) take the English subtitle translation of classic lines in the TV series *Journey to the West*, a Chinese classic fantastic novel, one of the four great Chinese masterpieces, as the object of their study to analyze the characteristics of English subtitle translation. They think that subtitle translation has the characteristics of 1. timeliness: in the shortest possible time, the audiences can obtain the information to be conveyed by the work through multiple channels of hearing and sight; 2. cultural adaptability: the need to consider the

customary characteristics of the source language and take into account the cultural habits of the target language; and the characteristics of purposefulness.

3 Theoretical framework

Delabastita proposed an analytical model for multimodal inter-semiotic shifts in 1990 (Delabastita 1990). He introduced four types of film signs categories: visual verbal signs, visual non-verbal signs, acoustic verbal signs, and acoustic non-verbal signs, and he outlined the types of operations involved in each of these four categories using some classical rhetoric, describes his model as comprising five shifts: *repetitio*, *adiectio, detractio*, *transmutatio*, and *substitutio.* Here I summarize the model of Delabastita, see Table 1.

Semiotic shift	Description
Repetitio	The film has been reproduced with all of its original material features
Adiectio	The sign is reproduced with a certain addition, new images, sounds, dialogue, or spoken comments have been introduced
Detractio	The reproduction is incomplete, it implies a reduction (cuts)
Transmutatio	The components of the sign are repeated in a somewhat different internal order, there being an alteration of the sign's textual relations
Substitutio	The sign is replaced with an altogether different sign

Table 1. Delabastita's model (based on Delabastita 1990: 102)

Delabastita's model was an early exploration combining multimodal discourse analysis with translation. His model employed terms based on classical rhetoric, which to some extent, may not be easily understandable to readers. Some translation researchers have chosen to change his terms with English equivalents, and this is precisely what Qian and Feng (2021) did.

Qian and Feng (2021) believe that Delabastita's cross-communicative transfer model aids in the analysis of multimodal costume drama. Building upon Delabastita's model, Qian and Feng developed a model with terms that are more easily comprehensible and specifically for English subtitle translation in their work 'Inter-semiotic Shifts in the Translation of Chinese Costume Drama Subtitles' (See Table 2). They utilized a Chinese costume drama as their corpus and analyzed the translation from Chinese lines to English subtitles. They argue that Delabastita's model "is not sufficient to describe the translation process involving different kinds of modes, more specific subcategories of shifts and more methods are needed" (Qian and Feng 2021). Hence, their model differs in certain aspects from Delabastita's: For instance, while Delabastita categorizes *Repetitio* strictly as a case of non-translation in linguistic terms (Delabastita 1990), when referring to *Repetitio*, which is "repetition" in English, it indicates that during the shift,

all original material features are displayed and the textual material will be translated structurally and semantically which stand very near to the original, for example, the Chinese expression "tui dou teng le腿都疼了" (lit. leg hurt) is translated directly as "my legs hurt". Throughout the translation process, the original text is presented in the translated version without any additional modifications. There is nothing special that need to be considered, Qian and Feng have overlooked this operation due to such reason. Additionally, Qian and Feng excluded *Substitutio*, deeming it not a typical case according to Delabastita's classification. Furthermore, they substituted *Adiectio* and *Detractio* with *Addition and Omission*, respectively, as these terms are commonly used in translation studies. Moreover, they introduced three new shifts: *Omission+Addition*, *Compensation,* and *Typographic Transformation*, which they believe frequently utilized in film translation. These three terms' explanations are detailed in the Table below. Within each shift, they specified more precise translation shifts and specified the description of the shifts between different modes. For instance, they proposed two types of *Addition*. The first involves adding punctuation to better convey emotions and tone in discourse, while the second includes introducing verbal modes to compensate for parts such as that could be expressed through body language in the original source text.

Intersemiotic shift	Sub-category of intersemiotic shift
Addition	Adding punctuation marks to transmit the meaning contained in the speech para-verbal modes in source text
	Adding addressing terms to show interpersonal relations reflected via the non-verbal modes in source text
Omission	Omitting expressions with cultural connotations/addressing terms as non-verbal means in the accompanying settings are able to transmit the omitted meanings
Omission+Addition	Omitting modal particles and adding punctuation marks to transmit the meanings contained in the modal particles and in the speech para-verbal modes in source text
	Omitting modal particles and adding verbal modes to transmit the meaning contained in the modal particles and reflected via the non-verbal modes in source text
	Omitting repetition and adding punctuation marks to transmit the meanings contained in the repetition in source text
Compensation	Explaining the meanings verbally in the target text because there're cultural connotations in the verbal or visual modes
	The translational cultural loss compensated by IMAGE
Typographic Transformation	Italicizing the font to differentiate inner monologue/written texts in the drama from the regular spoken form in the subtitle

Table 2. Qian and Feng's adjusted model (Qian and Feng 2021)

Qian and Feng's analysis focuses on the subtitling of ancient Chinese dramas in Chinese and English language pair, and it has the similarities with the translation of traditional Chinese Xiqu (both ancient Chinese drama and Xiqu involve culturally-bounded words and expressions, such

as Chinese poetry sentences and idioms), and compared to Delabastita's model, their term is an improvement and is easier to understand, so I prefer adopting the approach of Qian and Feng. But Qian and Feng's model is more focused on audiovisual productions. For performances in genres like Xiqu that somewhat differ from audiovisual dramas, some shift cannot be used. For example, they used a term like *Typographic transformation*, which is not suitable to use in Xiqu subtitles, because italizing the font is not used (except for being used as a book title) in the English subtitle of *Silang Visits His Mother*. Unlike in film and television series, the psychological activities of characters in Xiqu aren't typically conveyed through voice-overs.

Therefore, I believe that beyond Qian and Feng's framework, there are further modifications that need to be considered, especially concerning the English translation of Xiqu subtitles, so on the basis of Qian and Feng, I've implemented the following changes to adapt it for Xiqu subtitle translation: Firstly, I removed *Typographic transformation*, which, as mentioned above, will not be used in Xiqu subtitle translation; secondly, I added *Cultural correspondence*. In translating Chinese Xiqu, which often contains culturally specific terms and classical references, many cultural expressions require correspondence with more commonly used and easily understood words. For example, when translating the expression "chou mei bu zhan愁眉不展" (lit. "worried eyebrow has not stretched"), it is rendered in subtitle translation as "pull a long face", where the term "mei眉" (brow) is culturally substituted with "lian脸" (face), employing a *Cultural correspondence*. Moreover, in the subtitle translation of Chinese Xiqu, there are instances of *Perspective change*, and some solutions like *changing semantic focus* will be used in order to produce a stronger/ milder tone or make the meaning of sentences clearer. For example, in the analysis of example 5, the sentence "how to cross the border without the arrow of command" is transformed into "without the arrow of command, I would never be able to cross the border".

Based on the above, for the theoretical framework of Xiqu translation, the adjusted framework could be depicted in Table 3.[4] I changed the class name from "intersemiotic shift" to "solutions". This is because I am more interested in presenting a type of solution that applies to the translation of Xiqu subtitles.

Solutions	Sub-category
Addition	Adding Punctuation marks Adding addressing terms
Omission	Omitting expressions with cultural connotations/ addressing terms as non-verbal means in the accompanying settings are able to transmit the omitted meanings Omitting Chinese-specific vocabulary or language that doesn't contribute to comprehension.
Omission+Addition	Omitting modal particles and adding punctuation marks to transmit the meanings contained in the modal particles and in the speech para-verbal modes in source text Omitting modal particles and adding verbal modes to transmit the meaning contained in the modal particles and reflected via the non-verbal modes in source text

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[4] In my revision, I add some solutions with using of Pym's terminology (Pym 2016), for example Cultural correspondence, Perspective change etc., which is Pym's translation solutions.

	Omitting repetition and adding punctuation marks to transmit the meanings contained in the repetition in source text
Compensation	Explaining the meanings verbally in the target text
Cultural correspondence	Replacing culture specific expression with more common meaning
Perspective change	Changing semantic focus: Enhancing/weakening the tone by changing semantic focus or reducing comprehension bias

Table 3. my adjusted model for Xiqu subtitle translation

4   Examples analysis

In the examples, "ST" means original source text of the Xiqu (Sun 2012), "TT" means translated text in the script officially published (Sun 2012), and "Subtitle" means the English subtitle in the performance in the video[5]. Transliteration is the *pinyin* transliteration of the original Chinese ST. Glosses are the word-by-word translation which is easier to understand for non-Chinese speaking reader. For glosses, 1SG means first person singular, NEG means negation and LOC means locative. Therefore, neither TT nor Subtitle are my translation, they are just the corpus I chose to analyze. For the performance, the actors perform in Chinese, and the official translated text (TT) appears in the script for readers to read, while the translation subtitles appear in the video or are projected on a screen during the performance. If there are any subtitles that I don't think are translated well enough, for example, if the words do not convey the meaning of the source text, or if the meaning of the Chinese culture words are not translated, I'll give "my solution".

4.1   Omission

(1)

ST 1	我	本	是	杨	四	郎
Transliteration line 1	wo	ben	shi	yang	si	lang
Glosses line 1	1SG	originally	be	name		
ST 2	名	姓	改	换	将	杨
Transliteration line 2	ming	xing	gai	huan	jiang	yang
Glosses line 2	First-name	surname	change	change	make	Yang(surname)
ST 3	字	拆	木	易	匹	配
Transliteration line 3	zi	chai	mu	yi	pi	pei
Glosses line 3	word	dismantle	Muyi (name)		match	

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[5]   I found a performance excerpt of *Silang Visits Him Mother* online with English subtitles, and the subtitle corpus in this article is from that. See: https://b23.tv/RGxl3df (accessed 14 November 2024)

ST 4	良	缘						
Transliteration line 4	liang	yuan						
Glosses line 4	good	destiny						
TT	*I am Yang Silang and I took an alias dividing the character "Yang" into its components "Mu" and "Yi", I married you under this name*							
Subtitles	'My real name is Yang Silang, I used an alias in order to marry you'							

In this example, the solution of omission is employed in subtitle translation. The scene is that Yang Silang says this sentence to the princess to introduce his real name previously. The original source text (ST) contains an intricate description of Yang Silang's name, based on the fact that the Chinese character "Yang杨" is composed of "Mu木" and "Yi易", the surname "Yang杨" is broken down in detail into its component parts. Even each of these two components (the character "Mu木" and "Yi易") also have meaning themselves, but for non-Chinese speakers, these characters hold no inherent meaning, and their transliteration, such as "Mu" and "Yi", would not provide any clarity or context. Including such detailed incomprehensible linguistic information in subtitles could potentially hinder understanding for these non-Chinese audiences, leading to confusion regarding the sentence's meaning. Hence, in this context, the strategic use of omission is necessary in order to enhance audio-visual coherence and aid the audience's understanding.

In my previous study, I discussed that omission is a phenomenon where certain elements are omitted, and others are inevitably compensated (Zhu 2023), such as actor movements, tones, and so on. However, Xiqu subtitle translation presents a special situation. The presentation of translated text is intended for the audience to better grasp the performance storyline within a short duration. Due to significant differences between Chinese and English cultures, certain original text details that are truly incomprehensible and contribute minimally to the story or text can be omitted in subtitle translation without necessitating compensation. Therefore, the use of omission is suitable here because the "alias" in the original text doesn't contribute much to the audience's understanding in the story and has minimal impact on the storyline.

4.2 Addition

(2)

ST	我	有	心	回	营	去	见	母	一	面
Transliteration	wo	you	xin	hui	ying	qu	jian	mu	yi	mian
Glosses	1SG	have	heart	back	camp	go	see	mother	one	face
TT	*I would dearly love to go to the Song camp to meet her*									
Subtitle	'I want to go see her there in the Song encampment'									

This is a sentence said by Silang. The sentence describes Yang Silang's intention to return to the camp to visit his mother. The original text simply mentions "returning to the camp" without specifying to which camp. For Chinese audiences familiar with the story, they understand that this "camp" refers to the enemy camp relative to the Liao country where the princess resides. Yang Silang was originally a general of the Song and was captured by the Liao and then married the Liao princess. His desire to "return to camp" implies wanting to go back to the Song camp

to see his mother. If it is translated directly as "go to camp", it lacks clarity. In both translation and subtitles, "the Song" has been added to enhance clarity, making it "go see her there in the Song encampment", it aids the audience in better understanding the overall context and relationship in the story. If the translation changes "Song" to the "enemy", it would be clearer for the audience because it is more explicit to say "in the enemy's encampment". However, because he previously belongs to the Song, so "enemy" is just for the princess, not himself. I think he would not be willing to refer to his own country as "enemy", therefore, the translation just mentions the country's name here.

Addition: Adding punctuation marks

(3)

ST	我	若	探	母	不	回	转
Transliteration	wo	ruo	tan	mu	bu	hui	zhuan
Glosses	1SG	if	visit	mother	NEG	come	back
TT	*If I don't come back after visiting my mother, then…*						
Subtitles	'If I do not come back after seeing my mother…'						

The context behind this sentence lies in a scene where the princess asks her husband, Yang Silang, to take an oath, swearing that he will immediately return after visiting his mother. Yang Silang makes the aforementioned oath. However, because the oath consists of two clauses structured as an "if... then..." statement, after uttering "If I do not come back after seeing my mother," in order to indicate the pending completion of the oath and to demonstrate it is unfinished, ellipses are used in the subtitles, signifying that there is closely related sentence to follow. Moreover, the next sentence immediately after this first half of the oath is the princess asking, "Then what?" in an urgent tone, portraying that she urgently wishes to know the latter half of the oath in the scene. Hence, this subtitle sentence uses the strategy adding punctuation marks, this ellipsis serving to indicate an interruption in the statement, which remains incomplete, thereby building anticipation for the audience. Additionally, there is hardly any difference between the subtitle and translated text (translated text in the script), both of which have ellipses added, and the TT is also intended to give the reader a better understanding of the unfinished feeling of the expression.

4.3   Omission+Addition

(4)

ST	萧	天	佐	摆	天	门	两	国	交	战
Transliteration	Xiao	Tianzuo	bai	tian	men	liang	guo	jiao	zhan
Glosses	name		set	Heaven	Gate	two	country	blend	war
TT	*Xiao Tianzuo has deployed his Heaven Gate array and war between our two countries is imminent*									
Subtitle	'The Song has declared war on your country'									
My solution	The war between our two countries is imminent.									

This is a sentence said by Silang to say there is a war between two countries. In Xiqu, there are many characters, and the relationship among these characters can potentially hinder the comprehension of the overall story, especially for audiences unfamiliar with the narrative's background. In this example, a new character named Xiao Tianzuo emerges, identified as the brother of Empress Dowager Xiao and the uncle of the princess. He sets up the Heaven Gate array (a strategic defense formation involving the use of the geographical environment in conjunction with traditional Chinese Bagua array), initiating war against the Song. In the original ST, Yang Silang does not explicitly mention that it is a war instigated by the Liao, merely referring to a conflict between two nations. As a prominent general of the Song, Yang Silang, despite being married to the Liao princess after being captured, is aware that the war isn't initiated by the Song, but the Liao. But owing to his wife's Liao heritage, he avoids overtly attributing the conflict to the Liao, opting for a more neutral portrayal as "a conflict between two nations". The TT of the script remains largely unchanged, offering a faithful translation of the original text, which I think is not good for subtitles. For the audience, the name of the character Xiao Tianzuo and the intricate concept of the Heaven Gate array might not contribute significantly to their understanding of the story, so it can be omitted. Moreover, the sung segment is merely 2 seconds long, which allows limited time to convey crucial information.

The subtitles utilize *omission + addition*, translating the sentence as "The Song has declared war". By omitting the name "Xiao Tianzuo" and the term "Heaven Gate array", it will make the audience's understanding smoother. While eliminating these details that could impede understanding, the subtitles effectively retain the information and the meaning of the content. Furthermore, the phrase "a conflict between two nations" is omitted and "the Song has declared war" is added. The solution *addition* is used to bring out exactly who started the war, but there is a cultural issue involved here: the truth is that Liao started the war, but the subtitle translates it as Song started it. I think it may be due to the ancient Chinese culture of humility, where one tries to attribute as much fault as possible to oneself when talking to others, as in the subtitle here with Silang aiming to ignore the initiator of the conflict more tactfully, and attribute the mistake to his own country, the Song. However, this alteration involves a degree of distortion in the representation of facts, and I think it would be better if it makes use of only omission, simply stating, "the war between our two countries is imminent". This solution aims to enhance comprehension without burdening the audience with unnecessary or complex information, ensuring a smoother flow of the narrative without compromising the essential elements of the story.

4.4 Perspective change: Changing semantic focus

(5)

ST	无	有	令	箭	怎	过	关
Transliteration	wu	you	ling	jian	zen	guo	guan
Glosses	NEG	have	Arrow of command		how	pass	border
TT	*How can I go through the pass without the arrow of command?*						
Subtitle	'Without the arrow of command I would never be able to cross the border.'						

This sentence is an exclamation uttered by Yang Silang, he says this sentence to the princess to emphasise the crucial significance of the arrow of command. The ST is a rhetorical question sentence, to show Silang profoundly understands that without the arrow of command, crossing

the border is impossible. In the TT, an interrogative sentence is used to underscore the essence of "impossibility without the command arrow". However, to highlight the rhetorical nature and emphasize the tone, the addition of an exclamation mark could be beneficial. For instance, "How can I go through the pass without the arrow of command!" On the Xiqu stage, lines and lyrics are conveyed through singing and speaking. Some emotional expressions in singing might not be as readily grasped by the audience. Thus, providing subtle cues, like adding an exclamation mark here in subtitles can aid the audience in recognizing rhetorical questions and showing emphasized tone, achieving a favorable impact. If there is no punctuation here and it is just an interrogative sentence as the TT shows, it will be misunderstood by the audience as "inquiring about another method", like "Without the arrow, is there any other way to cross the border?". Regarding the subtitles in this example, changing the semantic focus from an interrogative sentence to an exclamative sentence, such as the subtitle translation "Without the arrow of command I would never be able to cross the border" offers a more direct understanding for the audience. It conveys the performer's emphasis on the importance of the arrow of command and illustrating the impossibility of crossing the border without it rather than seeking alternative solutions to cross the border, which may cause misunderstanding of the original meaning.

4.5 Cultural correspondence

(6)

ST 1	因	何	故	终	日	里
Transliteration line 1	yin	he	gu	zhong	ri	li
Glosses line 1	because	what	reason	whole	day	LOC
ST 2	愁	眉	不	展		
Transliteration line 2	chou	mei	bu	zhan		
Glosses line 2	worry	eyebrow	NEG	relax		
TT	*Why are you so sorrowful throughout the day?*					
Subtitle	'Why do you pull a long face all day?'					

ST	非	我	这	几	日	愁	眉	不	展
Transliteration	fei	wo	zhe	ji	ri	chou	mei	bu	zhan
Glosses	NEG	1SG	this	several	day	worry	eyebrow	NEG	relax
TT	*It's not just that I'm feeling sorrowful these days*								
Subtitle	'It's not that I've been unhappy these days.'								

This sentence is uttered by the princess. She asks her husband, Silang, why he is always unhappy. The phrase "chou mei bu zhan 愁眉不展" (worry eyebrows don't stretch) appears in both examples, referencing the body part: eyebrows. In the first example, it is a question from the princess, while in the second, it is Yang Silang's response. "Eyebrows are perceived in Chinese as one of the most obvious indicators of emotional states" (Yu 2002). In the first instance, the subtitle translates "worried eyebrows" as "pull a long face", employing substitution or what we can term as cultural correspondence, translating and correlating from one body part to another.

Chinese often associates expressions and emotions with specific body part movements or facial features. For instance, wrinkled eyebrows commonly convey a sense of sorrow, while relaxed brows denote a cheerful mood. Conversely, in English, facial expressions are generally conveyed by referencing the whole face or specific facial features like *smiling faces* or *a look of intense concentration on her face*. The second example translates "eyebrows" to express the overall feeling as "be unhappy", simplifying the description to directly convey the person's unhappiness. This solution considers Chinese as a pictorial language, where the original ST paints a vivid picture of a person with a frown, while the TT straightforwardly states their unhappiness. For subtitles, such translations tend to be more straightforward and easily understood.

(7)

ST	黄	沙	盖	脸	尸	骨	不	全
Transliteration	huang	sha	gai	lian	shi	gu	bu	quan
Glosses	yellow	sand	cover	face	corpse	bone	NEG	complete
TT	*Let the sand cover by face and my body be dismembered!*							
Subtitle	'May my body lie in yellow sand, my soul unable to return!'							

It is the latter part of Silang's oath. The first half is "If I do not come back after seeing my mother...". In this example, upon comparing the subtitles with the TT, it is evident that the TT adopts a highly literal solution, rendering "lian脸" (face) as "face", and "shi gu bu quan尸骨不全" (the body remains incomplete) as "dismembered". However, the subtitles translate "lian脸" as "body" and "shi gu bu quan尸骨不全" as "soul unable to return", indicating a substitution solution. This substitution aligns with the cultural differences between Chinese and Western cultures. In Chinese culture, the saying "si wu quan shi死无全尸" (dying without a complete body) often describes a gruesome death. However, in English-speaking cultures, emphasis is placed on the presence or absence of the soul, "soul unable to return" signifying the serious passing of life. Hence, the subtitles utilize substitution to create a stronger connection between the English-speaking audience and their cultural nuances.

Furthermore, the subtitles replace "huang sha gai lian黄沙盖脸" (the sand cover by my **face**) with "my **body** lie in yellow sand", as "huang sha gai lian黄沙盖脸" (the sand cover by my face) does not explicitly convey the presence or absence of life. "My body lie in yellow sand" serves to clearly indicate that the oath-taker is pledging with his own life, thereby ensuring the audience comprehends the gravity of this oath.

What's more, this sentence is the latter part of the oath, spoken by Yang Silang to reassure the princess, saying, "If I do not come back after seeing my mother, may my body lie in yellow sand, my soul unable to return!" This sentence is filled with impassioned emotions, signifying Yang Silang's determination. In the original text, there were no punctuation marks; however, subtitles added an exclamation mark to emphasize the speaker's resolute tone and affirmation of his oath, explicitly conveying the emotional intensity of this statement in the Xiqu.

5 Conclusion

This article examines the translation challenges associated with subtitles for traditional Chinese Xiqu, using the ST (source text), TT (translated text), and subtitle translations of *Silang Visits His Mother* as the study object. The aim is to identify the specific issues in Xiqu subtitle translation and to analyze the similarities and differences between Xiqu and film subtitle translation, and whether the methods used in film subtitle translation can be directly applied to Xiqu subtitle translation. If these methods are not directly applicable, with some analysis with examples, thereby propose a model of a set of translation solutions specifically suited for Xiqu subtitle translation drawing on previous research. This article conducts the analysis of the language characteristics, cultural connotations, and translation solutions in Xiqu subtitle translation using the subtitles of *Silang Visits His Mother* (the English subtitles were found from an online video of this Xiqu). Based on the analysis of the examples, this article confirms that the solutions applicable to subtitle translation for film and television dramas are also applicable to Xiqu translation, but some improvement is needed. I refine Qian and Feng's model in this article, present a model suitable for Xiqu subtitle translation, outlined in Table 3.

In general, subtitle translation, unlike script translation, demands concise expression due to time constraints. While scripts allow for more detail, subtitles must convey essential information within a limited time span. Therefore, in subtitle translation, we must streamline the language to ensure that audiences can understand the important content in a short period of time. This may require omitting some details and focusing on the core meaning to keep the subtitles concise and clear. Therefore, ***omission*** is often used in subtitle translation. Alternatively, increasing the audience's understanding of the script can be accomplished by ***adding punctuation***, or by ***changing the semantic focus*** to emphasize the importance of a particular aspect.

If a specific type of subtitle is considered, I mean subtitle translation of Xiqu, it has some of the same features as the subtitle translation of film and television dramas. Both ancient Chinese dramas and Xiqu involve cultural-bounded words and expressions, such as Chinese poetry sentences and idioms. As a result, I can use the common solutions that are used in film subtitle translation proposed by Qian and Feng and which have been mentioned above. But as discussed earlier, subtitle translation of Xiqu still has some parts which are different from those of film and television dramas and need special consideration. For example, Xiqu has no inner language and no voice-over; and films can convey various kinds of information through background music and scene changes. This means translational cultural loss can be compensated by image or background music, whereas in the more singular stage form of Xiqu, information is primarily conveyed through the performers' singing. Consequently, subtitles for Xiqu should be clearer and more explicitly detailed to correspond with this performance style. In this case, for some cultural-bounded words, we need to use ***cultural correspondence*** or adjusting word expressions to match the audience's cultural background, making it easier for the audience to accept and understand the content of the performances. Xiqu has a lot of modal particles, and the characters' moods are varied and distinct, so translating these tones well in subtitles is also something worth considering. By analyzing the examples, it can be seen that the tone can be made explicit by ***adding punctuation***, and some of the tones that need to be weakened can be dealt with by ***changing semantic focus***. This mode or tone can also be operated by adding parentheses and labeling the tone in the parentheses, e.g., "May my body lie in yellow sand, my soul unable to return! (he is in the firm mode)". However, this solution is not present in the existing subtitle text, and adding a sentence may be limited by the subtitle space. All these

solutions help to solve the challenges of cultural, linguistic and emotional transformations in Xiqu subtitle translation and enhance the audience's overall comprehension of the Xiqu performance.

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