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Original Article

The translation of animation titles: A case study on English, Japanese, and Chinese titles

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ABSTRACT: Though the translation of film titles has not been firmly established within translation studies, the existing studies mainly focus on the translation strategies and process analysis from classic theories including Skopos theory and semantic equivalence. Meanwhile, there has been limited research to examine the translation of animation titles. This paper delves into the intricate world of animation titles and their translation dynamics across languages, especially focusing on English, Japanese, and Chinese, employing a methodology that combines data from IMDb.com and chineseanime.org with Weiciyun and Python analysis. The study investigates titles' characteristics and features in each source language and the translation strategies used among them. The findings highlight that English, Japanese, and Chinese animation titles possess distinct structural and semantic attributes. These traits reflect the inherent linguistic norms and cultural preferences of each language. Furthermore, the study uncovers multifaceted translation strategies used to bridge the linguistic gaps among languages, including transliteration, literal translation, and adaptation. As for creative adaptation which has a large percentage of every translation process, it is conspicuous that the characteristics of those translated titles largely remain consistent with the features of the source texts. Also, this study exposes discernible patterns of cultural power dynamics influencing translation strategies, particularly evident in the prevalence of English loanwords and transliterations.

KEYWORDS: translation studies; animation titles; data analysis; cross-cultural communication; translation techniques

1. Introduction

An unparalleled rise in popularity and cultural influence has been experienced by the global animation business (Furniss, 2012), inspiring intercultural dialogue and enthralling viewers from various linguistic origins. This phenomenon has intensified the urgent need for precise and culturally aware translation techniques, particularly in the area of animation titles. Similar to film titles, animation titles operate as a work's first point of contact with a potential audience, frequently influencing viewers' opinions and expectations (Chuang and Eoh, 2019). As a result, translating these titles becomes a challenging task that calls for both linguistic finesse and a deep understanding of cultural quirks.

A variety of scholarly perspectives highlighting the importance of linguistic and cultural aspects in

the translation process serve as the foundation for this theme. According to Bellezza et al. (2001), titles have a pivotal role of titles as initiators of audience involvement. Venuti's (2012) theory on foreignization and domestication gains relevance in the transliteration tactics identified in the study. Doerksen and Shimamura (2001) discuss the connection between sentiment and viewer engagement that the power of negative thematic content attracts audience attention and connects more deeply. Moreover, Chaume (2012) emphasizes the intersection of language and culture in the translation process and that cultural substitution is observed in the adaptation. Furthermore, Bassnett (2014) and Schleiermacher (2014) observe the application of adaptation and omission strategies in the translation of cultural-specific elements.

Adaptation in translation involves the deliberate modification of a source text, enabling the translator to incorporate their own artistic sensibilities, distinct style, and pertinent cultural elements into the rendition (Munday, 2018). This strategy, often termed creative adaptation, affords translators a greater latitude in their approach, allowing them to employ a less strict adherence to the literal rendition of the original text (Venuti, 1995). Free translation, also recognized as dynamic equivalence or functional equivalence in translation theory (Nida, 1982), prioritizes the conveyance of the underlying meaning and communicative intent of the source text. It places less emphasis on a verbatim reproduction of the exact wording or structure, aiming instead for a rendition that reads naturally and fluently in the target language. In the context of this paper, free translation refers to the cases in which the target titles do not have semantic equivalent with the source titles.

In order to conduct a quantitative analysis of linguistic and stylistic trends within the realm of animation titles, the study adopts an empirical framework supported by computational analysis using Weiciyun and Python 3.11.2 as tools. The analysis of animation titles in this paper spans three important languages: English, Japanese, and Chinese. This study examines the distinguishing characteristics of titles in each language and clarifies the tactics used during their translation procedures using a rich corpus of titles and a comprehensive methodology. This investigation reveals the complex interplay between linguistic traits, cultural variables, and translational mechanics. With careful consideration for the linguistic and cultural context of each language, the diverse nature of this research lends itself to the incorporation of a variety of translation theories and methodologies, ranging from direct transliteration to nuanced adaptation. By unraveling the strategies behind the production and translation of animation titles in three languages, this study attempts to provide valuable insights into the interplay of linguistic traits and cultural factors. The results of this study are applicable to translators as well as a wider range of cross-cultural communication within this field and beyond.

2. Literature review

The translation of film titles has been discussed from perspectives including linguistic (Kaneeva and Bagdasaryan, 2021; Nalabandian and Ireland, 2022), cultural nuances (Díaz-Pérez, 2008; Tsoi, 2022), and audience response (Zhou, 2017; Bai, 2018). This section aims to offer an informative synthesis of the current debate over the translation of animation into the three most widely used languages—English, Japanese, and Chinese.

A popular viewpoint on the research on (the translation of) film titles is the Skopos theory (Schubert, 2004) since the appellative effect of film titles is to draw as much attention as possible from the audience (Surdyk and Urban, 2016). Leonardi (2011) proposed that nearly all linguistic functions of titles possess the capability to amplify the impact of their appellative role by adding genre keywords and/or emotionally salient vocabulary. Furthermore, Doerksen and Shimamura (2001) examined the symbiotic

relationship between emotional content and source memory. Their research provides valuable insight into the analysis of sentiment words in the translation of animation titles.

There is existing research that categorized the translation strategies, for example, Y. He (2001) suggested that the primary techniques employed in translating film titles (Chinese and English) include transliteration, free translation, and creative translation. Petar Gabrić et al.'s research (2017) has not only classified translating methods but also analyzed the diachronic changes and observed from a specific cultural-historical perspective. Chaume (2012) and O'Hagan (2013) explored the interplay among culture, context, and creativity in audiovisual translation. This is echoed in the adaptation strategies in Chinese titles where the protagonist attributes are added as adjectives. Also, O'Hagan's (2013) assertion regarding the cultural and linguistic challenges of translation aligns with the translation of onomatopoeia-rich Japanese titles.

The transliteration employed in the translation of animation titles seeks to preserve the phonological resonance of the source texts, echoing Venuti's work (2012) regarding the challenges and significance of preserving foreignizing elements in translation. Bassnett (2014) explores the translation of cultural-specific elements that can be employed when analyzing the translation of character names, location names, and idiomatic expressions in animation titles. Moreover, since the "social turn" follows the "cultural turn" in the 1980s in translation studies, Bourdieu's sociological approach has been applied to examine the translators as agents in intercultural communication (Z. He, 2018). Schleiermacher's (2014) work shows that how strategies align with target audience preferences vary across languages and it is helpful when discussing the adaptation and omission strategies in the translation of animation titles.

While the translation of film titles, especially within the realm of animation, has been scrutinized extensively, it is worth noting that research in the domain of animated series, particularly in the context of multilingual translation and quantitative perspective, remains comparatively underexplored. According to Wang and Ji (2021)'s analysis of animated film titles in both Chinese and English, adopting an eco-translatological perspective, reveals that while free translation is the prevailing method, creative translation is the least commonly employed strategy. Yet, research on the translation of film titles and animation in three languages and the characteristics of the source language has been relatively infrequent.

This analysis of the translation of animation titles highlights the complex interactions among languages, cultures, and translation methods. This literature review supports the relevance of the study's findings within the larger academic discourse on audiovisual translation and cross-cultural communication by referencing a wide range of prior studies.

3. Methodology

The author meticulously constructed a corpus encompassing three lists, comprising a total of 1233 entries of animation titles. This corpus was compiled by drawing data from IMDb.com (Internet Movie Database) and Chineseanime.org, an official platform for Chinese donghua (In English, Donghua refers to animation produced in China). As asserted by Surdyk and Urban (2016), IMDb stands as the foremost and universally acknowledged repository for information regarding movies, TV shows, and prominent figures within the global entertainment industry. Eminent scholars such as Schubert (2004), Berdis (2013), and Gabrić (2017) have similarly drawn upon this source. The initial list, sourced from IMDb.com and titled Most Popular Cartoons, features 110 titles in English. The author then collected the official Chinese and Japanese translations of these titles. Correspondingly, the second list, originating from IMDb.com's Rating Count in the Animation/Anime category, comprises 151 Japanese animation titles. Then, the

author manually selected 150 Chinese donghua titles from Chineseanime.org by popularity (At chineseanime.org, users can employ the search tool to browse anime based on their "popular" ranking. See https://chineseanime.top/anime/?status=&type=&order=popular#google_vignette. Accessed 30 August 2023), as IMDb does not yet offer a dedicated category for this genre.

All three lists were structured with English, Chinese, and Japanese columns, with the source text on the left and the target texts on the right two columns. For securing official title translations, English translations are from crunchyroll.com and IMDb.com, Japanese translations from yahoo.co.jp, vanblog.net, and filmarks.com, and Chinese translations were culled from baidu.com, douban.com, and bilibili.com.

To facilitate the analysis of textual data, this study employed Weiciyun and Python (Given that Weiciyun assesses "word frequency count" based on phrases for Chinese titles, wherein two Chinese characters are typically regarded as one word, a thorough analysis of single Chinese character frequency was conducted using Python for a more granular examination). This comprehensive approach enabled tasks encompassing lexical frequency statistics, word segmentation, part-of-speech tagging, keyword extraction, sentiment analysis, and named entity recognition. The analytical process commenced by scrutinizing the titling strategies and assessing potential disparities across the three languages. Subsequently, the study categorized the translation strategies within each language, facilitating interlanguage comparative analysis. The final phase is the comparison of those strategies and uncovering the rationale behind these changes. This exploration considered pertinent socio-historical and cultural underpinnings, guided by relevant translation theories.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Characteristics of animation titles in different languages

This section undertakes an analysis of animation titles across three source languages to discern their respective naming strategies and delineate inter-language variations.

4.1.1. Linguistic patterns and variation

Through the application of Weiciyun and Python for statistical computation, it becomes evident that the three languages exhibit different percentages on different types of words (see **Figure 1**). English titles have the largest percentage of proper nouns, while Chinese titles exhibit a higher prevalence of verbs. They share analogous percentages of adjectives, while the usage of punctuation marks varies significantly. Regarding title length, Japanese titles tend to be the longest with an average of 4.13 words, while Chinese titles possess the shortest length.

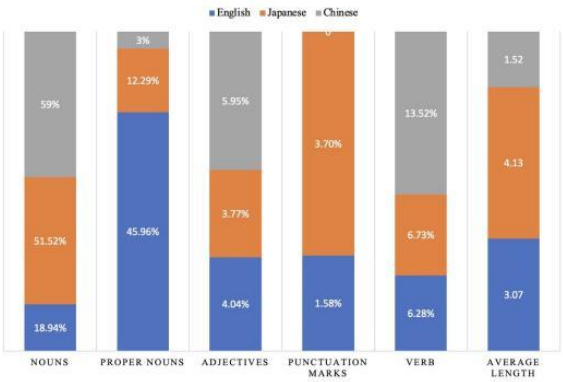

Figure 1. Characteristics of titles in each language.

4.1.2. Genre focus across languages

The analysis of word frequency employs both traditional word count and TF-IDF (term frequency-inverse document frequency) methods, offering insights into the most recurrent semantically-laden terms within animation titles. In English titles, apart from qualifiers and prepositions such as *the, of, and*, frequently encountered terms include *show* (6 times), *adventure(s)* (6 times), and *series* (4 times). For Japanese titles, common words include *世界* (sekai; world) (7 times), *異* (i; difference) (5 times), *ブラック* (bukarru; black) (4 times), *様* (sama; honorific) (3 times), and *闘士* (tōshi; fighter) (3 times), along with several other terms appearing twice, such as *俺* (ore; I), *さん* (san; Mr./Mrs.), *彼女* (kanojo; she/girlfriend), *学園* (gakuen; school/campus), and *魔術* (majutsu; magic). On the other hand, in Chinese titles, a trend of clustering is evident, with characters like *神* (shen; God) (24 times), *仙* (xian; immortal) (11 times), the 10-time-words are *武* (wu; martial), *天* (tian; heaven), *剑* (jian; sword), the 8-time-words are *尊* (zun; honor), *万* (wan; ten thousand), *界* (jie; realm), and the 7-time-words are *世* (shi; world), *师* (shi; teacher/mentor), *人* (ren; people), *龙* (long; dragon).

Within the animation field of these three languages, an extensive range of genres caters to diverse audiences and interests. However, a nuanced perspective can be observed from word count statistics, suggesting distinct genre inclinations for each language. The situation is less straightforward for English titles, where frequently recurring words include *show, adventure(s),* and *series*. In contrast, Japanese animation, renowned for its genre diversity, upholds this reputation in the analyzed data. Terms, such as *fighters, girlfriend, campus, magic, black, and different worlds,* signify a spectrum ranging from fantasy genres with mythical creatures and magical realms to those catering to younger audiences, focusing on themes of romance, friendship, battles, and adventures. Chinese animation titles, characterized by keywords such as *God, honor, martial, sky,* and *emperor,* align with predictable content derived from Chinese mythology, legends, and folklore. These titles frequently feature mythical creatures, gods, and legendary heroes. Such animations are distinguished by their infusion of fantastical elements, epic narratives, and rich cultural symbolism.

4.1.3. Content and grammar in animation titling

Regarding content and grammar within animation titles, a predominant strategy in English titling, accounting for 47%, involves naming animations after the protagonist, as seen in titles like *The Simpsons, Doug*, and *Arthur*. Titles deriving from meaningful locations, such as *South Park, Castlevania, and The Cleveland Show*, also find prevalence. This technique, as noted by Haidegger (2015), is used to entice potential audiences by inciting curiosity about the life story that will unfold. Notably, 86.7% of English titles incorporate either the protagonist's name or a location. Alongside terms like show and adventure(s), certain titles divulge the characters' occupations and personal traits, providing a subtle narrative glimpse and allowing readers to form preliminary expectations about the content, as exemplified by titles like *Angry Beavers* and *Inspector Gadget*.

The list of Japanese titles houses 20 titles featuring English words, exemplified by titles like *Banana Fish*. Also, in this corpus, a pronounced predilection toward loanwords (外来語; gairaigo) and the direct incorporation of English terms warrants careful consideration. Japanese loanwords undergo phonological and morphological adaptations when assimilating foreign terms. Moreover, a substantial 56% of titles, a total of 84 titles, encompass loanwords, with exceptions such as *ヤスケ* (Yasuke), a Japanese protagonist's name. For instance, *ブラッククローバー* (burakku kurōbā; black clover) transliterates the English phrase. Loanwords possibly acquire new or specialized connotations as they

evolve from their original meaning, an exemplar lies in キャラ (kyara), within *弱キャラ友崎くん* (yowakyara tomozaki kun; Bottom-Tier Character Tomozaki), derived from the word, character, yet signifying personality in Japanese.

Compared to English titles, primarily reliant on protagonist and location names, Japanese titles, though 20% align with similar nomenclature strategies, encompass a gamut of methodologies. A salient example is the poetic style, evident in titles such as *ひぐらしのなく頃に* (higurashi no naku tokini; when the cicada is crying), translated as *When They Cry*. Moreover, Japanese titles prominently employ onomatopoeia, as seen in *デュラララ!!* (durarara; durarara) and *Btooom!* Additionally, titles involving action codes, troop names, battles, and representative objects/things are prevalent. These diverse strategies mirror English movie titles' established principles, encapsulating characters, themes, narratives, subject matter, and emotional tonality (Chung and Eoh, 2019). Noteworthy is the structural difference: while English titles commonly adopt single-phrased compositions, Japanese titles encompass complete sentences, exemplified by *俺を好きなのはお前だけかよ* (ore wo sukinanowa omae dakekayo; Are You Really the Only One Who Likes Me?) and *この素晴らしい世界に祝福を!* (konosubarashii sekai ni shukufuku wo; God's Blessing on This Wonderful World!). Consequently, the average length of Japanese titles extends to 3.75 words, marking it as the lengthiest among the languages.

Drawing from the analysis mentioned before, Japanese titles exhibit a diverse way of creating titles in contrast to English. It can be deduced that this phenomenon is intrinsically tied to the expansive scope of content encapsulated within Japanese animation. Echoing the insights gleaned from the prior section, Chinese animation within the corpus finds categorization predominantly within the martial arts genre, often contextualized within the realms of Chinese mythology and legends (Wei et al., 2023). However, an interesting departure surfaces when scrutinizing title naming conventions. In Chinese animation, adhering to the protagonists' name as a naming strategy deviates slightly from the norm. Only a solitary animation, *小绿和小蓝* (xiao lv he xiao lan; Beryl and Sapphire), follows this naming rule. Instead, a substantial 47% of Chinese titles gravitate toward utilizing the protagonist's official title or ranking, typified by appellations like *十方剑圣* (shi fang jian sheng; Sword Saint of the Ten Realms) and *盖世帝尊* (gai shi di zun; The Galaxy Emperor). Distinctive to Chinese titles, whose predominant form aligns with noun-phrases, with only two titles diverging from this pattern to adopt full sentences. For instance, *我家师父超凶哒* (wo jia shi fu chao xiong da; My Master is Super Fierce) exemplifies this structural deviation.

4.1.4. Sentimental nuances

In terms of sentiment analysis, a discernible pattern emerges across the languages under examination. English titles display 13.33% positive and 3.81% negative words. Chinese titles, on the other hand, incorporate a higher proportion of positive words at 16.39% alongside 6.56% of negative words. Contrasting these two datasets, Japanese titles share a similar percentage of positive words, 13.77%, but notably diverge in the case of negative words, accounting for a markedly elevated 21.56%.

Within the ambit of existing scholarly investigations into film titles, the incorporation of pessimistic thematic elements emerges as contextually relevant, aligning with the central narrative of cinematic works. This stands in stark juxtaposition to sanguine thematic attributes (Bellezza et al, 2001). Notably, the integration of negative thematic content has exhibited a heightened efficacy in piquing audience interest and engagement, outshining its optimistic thematic counterpart (Doerksen and Shimamura, 2001; Chung and Eoh, 2009). From these tenets, one may infer that the potency of Japanese animation's success could

be attributed, at least in part, to their titling strategies.

4.2. Translation analysis

4.2.1. English as the source language

1) Translating English titles into Japanese

As previously discussed, Japanese loanwords serve as a potent linguistic tool for transliteration, facilitating phonological adjustments. Furthermore, Japanese source texts frequently incorporate a substantial proportion of loanwords. Within this corpus, a solitary translated title deviates from loanword usage. This departure is encapsulated by the title *Disenchantment*, deemed intricate to comprehend and subsequently rendered as *魔法が解けて* (mahō ga tokete; magic is melting).

The Japanese translations predominantly align with transliteration, exhibiting a classification into the ensuing translation strategies:

a) Transliteration without adaptation: 20%. This strategy involves straightforward transliteration, excluding certain components such as *the, of,* or *the animated series*. Instances include *Doug*, rendered as *ダグ* (dagu), and *Thundercats*, transliterated as *サンダーキャッツ* (sandākyatsu).

b) Transliteration with literal translation: 28%. This approach combines transliteration with literal translation. For instance, "Gadget" in *Inspector Gadget* is transliterated as *ガジェット* (gajetto) and "Inspector" is directly translated into *警部* (keibu; captain, inspector).

c) Creative adaptation: Transliteration with omission: 15%. This strategy is often observed in lengthy titles like *The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack* and *The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy*. Due to their extended nature, the Japanese titles use transliterations and shorten them into *フラップジャック* (furappujyakku) and *ビリー&マンディ* (birī & mandi).

Transliteration with Free Translation: 35%. In addition to transliterating the original title *The Flintstone* as *フリントストーン* (furintosutōn), the Japanese version supplements it with *原始家族* (genshi Kazoku; primitive family) to inform the audience of the plot. Similarly, *Recess* is transliterated as *リセス* (risesu), with the addition of *～ぼくらの休み時間～* (bokura no yasumi jikan; our rest time) to contextualize the theme.

An intriguing phenomenon arises in the form of reverse-translation during this process. For example, words like *Ninja* and *Samurai* in titles like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Samurai Jack* are originally from Japanese as culture-specific words. Nonetheless, due to the widespread familiarity and popularity of Japanese culture worldwide, these words are directly transliterated into English titles without adaptation or explanation. In Japanese, these terms are conventionally represented using Japanese characters (忍者 and 侍). Yet, the two words are presented in Japanese using loanwords as *ニンジャ* (ninja) and *サムライ* (samurai), commonly employed for foreign borrowed vocabulary.

2) Translating English titles into Chinese

A pronounced distinction surfaces between Japanese and Chinese translations concerning the application of transliteration and free translation. In Chinese translations, a recurrent trend materializes, wherein transliterated protagonist and location names are frequently embellished with preceding adjectives or succeeding nouns.

a) Translation strategy with transliteration

Transliteration without adaptation: 8%. Examples include the Chinese rendering of *Rick and Morty* as *瑞克和莫蒂* (rui ke he mo di) and *The Cleveland Show* as *克利夫兰秀* (ke li fu lan xiu).

Transliteration with literal translation: 9%. This strategy combines transliteration with direct translation. For example, *Danny Phantom* is translated as *幻影丹尼* (huan ying dan ni), amalgamating transliterated *Danny* (丹尼) and a literal rendering of *Phantom* (幻影).

Transliteration with adaptation: 38%. Transliterated protagonist and location names are often preceded by adjectives or followed by nouns aligning with characters' traits, personalities, or roles. For instance, titles such as *Clerks* are accompanied by *疯狂* (feng kuang; crazy), *Archer* by *间谍* (jian die; spy), and *Chowder* by 爱吃鬼 (ai chi gui; gourmand, glutton). Another adaptation involves appending nouns after the transliteration, such as *一家* (yijia; family), *日记* (riji; diary), *小子* (xiaozi; son, young boy), or *冒险* (mao xian; adventure). For instance, *Arthur* becomes *亚瑟小子* (ya se xiao zi; young boy Arthur), and *Doug* is translated as *阿德日记* (a de ri ji; Doug's diary).

b) Literal translation: 12%. For instance, *Justice League* is translated to *正义联盟* (zheng yi lian meng), and *Love, Death & Robots* becomes *爱、死亡和机器人* (ai, si wang he ji qi ren).

c) Free translation: 33%. *The Powerpuff Girls* is rendered as *飞天小女警* (fei tian xiao nv jing), meaning "the girl police officer who is flying around the sky." *Pinky and the Brain* opts for a distinctive approach, rather than transliteration, the Chinese translation underscores the protagonists' attributes as mice and their adventurous journey, thus becoming *两只老鼠打天下* (liang zhi lao shu da tian xia), signifying two mice conquering the world. This imaginative translation strategically captures the audience's attention and curiosity.

3) Conclusion

Based on the analysis and data from **Figure 2**, it is conspicuous that Japanese titles add more sentiment expressions, especially positive words, while Chinese words add negative words. Moreover, since transliteration is the most used method in the EN-JP translation, it can be understood that the proper nouns, including the protagonist's names and location names, do not have a drastic change, and the length follows the source text as well. Since there are more examples of adaptation in EN-CN translation, the percentage of proper nouns is significantly low since the titles are translated to follow the target culture and language style. It can be roughly concluded that EN-JP translation uses more foreignization strategy compared to EN-CN translation. Furthermore, an analysis of loanword data reveals a notable disparity in the prevalence of English as the lingua franca. Within the English category, the representation is merely 2.85%. In contrast, a substantial increase is observed in both EN-JP and EN-CN translations, accounting for 31.42% and 99.05% respectively.

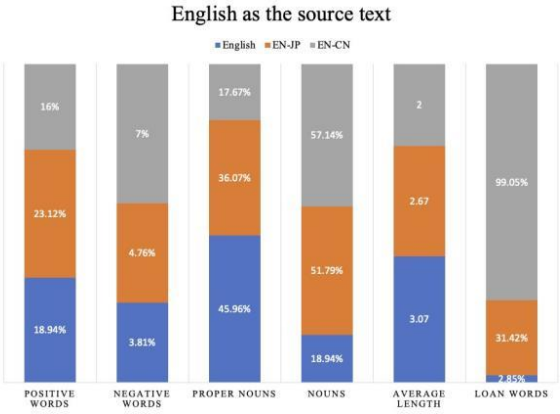

Figure 2. English as the source text.

4.2.2. Japanese as the source language

1) Translating Japanese titles into English

Drawing from the delineated characteristics of Japanese titles, a notable portion of these titles, comprising over half, encompasses loanwords. Additionally, a subset of titles adopts onomatopoeic constructs. Predominantly, these titles are rendered into English through literal translation. However, an assortment of alternative translation strategies also manifests within this category.

a) Transliteration: 18%. While certain Japanese loanwords possess familiarity with the Japanese audience, their transliteration into English doesn't necessarily enjoy the same level of comprehension. For example, in *NARUTO -ナルト- 疾風伝*, *Naruto-ナルト* is a protagonist's name, and *疾風伝* (shippuden) signifies "the legend/record of gale". The transliteration *Naruto: Shippuden* may perplex English viewers. Although the name and onomatopoeic transliterations are recurrent, instances arise where transliterations may not resonate without plot context. For instance, *呪術廻戦* (jujutsu kaisen), signifying "battle spell/incantation", encounters a unique challenge in its transliteration, as *廻戦* (kaisen) holds a nuanced meaning of "revolving/rotating war/battle". Despite this, the English title, *Jujutsu Kaisen*, captures popularity among fans.

b) Transliteration/literal translation with explanation: 4%. Titles like *君に届け* (kimi ni todoke) possess poetic connotations, translatable as "reaching you" or "to reach you", wherein the English version *Kimi ni Todoke: From Me to You* employs a transliteration augmented with an explanation.

c) Literal translation: 41%. The prevalence of literal translation is attributed to the substantial usage of loanwords. For instance, *僕のヒーローアカデミア* (boku no hīrō akademia) translates to *My Hero Academia*, while *サイコパス*(saikopasu) is rendered as *Psycho-Pass*.

d) Creative adaptation: Abbreviation with literal translation: 22%. This approach responds to the aforementioned challenge of the comprehensibility of English transliteration. For instance, *この素晴らしい世界に祝福を!* (kono subarashii sekai ni shukufuku wo) translates directly as "giving a blessing to this wonderful world". The official English title, *Konosuba*, an abbreviation of the Japanese title, is accompanied by *God's Blessing on This Wonderful World!*

Shortened translation: 9%. This strategy entails omitting specific elements in translation. For instance, the English title *Gurren Lagann* retains *グレンラガン* (guren ragan), while *コードギアス 反逆のルルーシュ* (cōdo kiasu hangyaku no rurūshu) solely translates the initial part as *Code Geass*.

e) Free translation: 6%. This strategy tends to be applied to longer titles or those structured as sentences rather than phrases. For example, *異世界魔王と召喚少女の奴隷魔術* (isekai maō to shōkan shōjo no dorei majutsu) translates to "the otherworldly demon king and the slave magic of the summoned girl". Given the average length of English titles being 3.07 words, the official title "How Not to Summon a Demon Lord" is adopted for concision and narrative alignment.

2) Translating Japanese titles into Chinese

a) Literal translation: 53%. Within this segment, literal translation predominates, constituting the largest share. This can be attributed to the use of Kanji characters in both languages, facilitating direct replication in Chinese translation. For instance, *銀河英雄伝説* (genga eiyū densetsu; Legend of the Galactic Heroes) transitions into *银河英雄传说* (yin he ying xiong chuan shuo), while *天国大魔境* (tengoku daimakyō; Heavenly Delusion) transposes as *天国大魔境* (tian guo da mo jing). Although these titles align with Chinese expressive norms, certain titles might encounter interpretational challenges among Chinese audiences. For instance, *天元突破グレンラガン* (tengen toppa gurenragan; literal translation: this is the drill that will pierce the heavens: gurren lagann) becomes *天元突破 红莲螺岩* (tian yuan tu po, hong lian luo yan), wherein the Chinese component *天元突破*, though comprehensible phonetically, lacks semantic coherence. Similarly, *無職転生*(mushoku tensei; Jobless Reincarnation) adopts the translation *无职转生* (wu zhi zhuan sheng), although the accurate translation of "jobless reincarnation" is "无业转世" (wu ye zhuan shi).

b) Adaptation: 8%. This part mainly includes omitted translation that excludes certain elements in translation. For instance, *コードギアス反逆のルルーシュ* (cōdo kiasu hangyaku no rurūshu) omits *Code Geass*, retaining only the protagonist's description as "rebellious Lulushu" (反叛的鲁鲁修; fan pan de luluxiu).

c) Free Translation: 39%. Frequently observed, Chinese titles generally eschew onomatopoeia or single adjectives/nouns, a phenomenon that aligns with free translation practices. For instance, the English title of *デュラララ!!* (durarara) remains a direct translation, *Durarara!!!*, while the Chinese rendition becomes *无头骑士异闻录* (wu tou qi shi yi wen lu), signifying "the record of the headless knight's unusual experience". *メダロット* (metarotto; Metabot) becomes *徽章战士* (hui zhang zhan shi), meaning "warriors/soldiers of badges". This underscores the consistent application of Chinese free translation principles, mirroring earlier-discussed characteristics of Chinese titles, which tend to feature occupations coupled with names or appearance attributes.

3) Conclusion

Examining **Figure 3**, it becomes evident that in terms of sentiment analysis, proper nouns, and nouns, there are relatively minimal changes in the data, except for a marginal increase in both positive and negative words within Chinese titles. As for the length of titles, it's notable that Chinese titles are the shortest at 2.27, although this figure remains higher than that of the Chinese source text, which stands at 1.52. Furthermore, as elucidated in sections 1) and 2), where a substantial prevalence of transliteration and literal translation is indicated, it can be inferred that English and Chinese predominantly employ the foreignization approach when translating Japanese titles. Within the category of loanwords, it is notable that 63.16% of Japanese titles incorporate English. In translated titles, this figure stands at 36.18% for JP-EN translations and 40.13% for JP-CN translations.

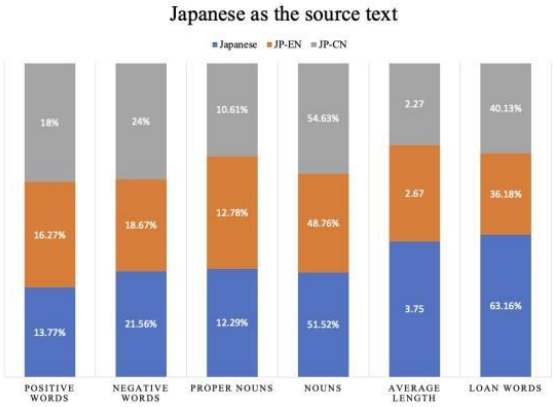

Figure 3. Japanese as the source text.

4.2.3. Chinese as the source language

1) Translating Chinese titles into English

In contrast to Japanese-to-English translation dynamics, a marked distinction emerges when considering Chinese titles in English. The salient difference lies in the infrequent occurrence of direct transliterations from Chinese. An intriguing exemplar of this phenomenon is the translation of *一人之下* (yi ren zhi xia), a prominent Chinese animation. Its English title is *Hitori no Shita: under one person*. Curiously, "hitori no shita" is the transliteration of Japanese pronunciation, and "under one person" is the literal explanation. Even the singular instance of a title bearing protagonists' names, *小绿和小蓝* (xiao lv he xiao lan; green and blue), diverges from transliteration. Instead, the names metamorphose into vivid gemstones, *Beryl and Sapphire*, which can be categorized as domestication.

a) Literal translation: 48%. This constitutes the predominant translation strategy, exemplifying a significant trend. Illustratively, *尸兄* (shi xiong) undergoes a literal transformation to *Zumbi Brother* in English, while *妖怪名单* (yao guai ming dan) is translated to *Monster List*. Furthermore, discerning from data analysis, the most recurrent English terms encompass *God, legend, sword, dragon, martial, spirit, master,* and *supreme.* These terms correspond loosely with the frequently employed characters in Chinese titles (refer to 4.1.2), manifesting an indicative affinity for literal translation stemming from their popularity.

b) Adaptation: 49%. Within this category, a conspicuous inclination towards simplification surfaces. For instance, *女神有点灵* (nv shen you dian ling), signifying "the goddess is a bit spiritual", metamorphoses into the English title *Oh, My Goddess*. *赘婿* (zhui xu), meaning the notion of a man marrying into and residing with his bride's family, presenting a phenomenon less familiar to English audiences. Consequently, the English title reads as *My Heroic Husband*, reflecting a compromise with audience expectations.

c) Free translation: 3%. For example, *火凤燎原* (huo feng liao yuan), with its literal connotation of "burning phoenix" and "starting a prairie fire", is distilled in English translation as *The Ravages of Time*.

2) Translating Chinese titles into Japanese

The structural congruence of the kanji systems between Chinese and Japanese engenders a direct transposition of characters in Japanese titles, which is 73%. For instance, the Chinese title *魔道祖师* (mo dao zu shi; The Founder of Diabolism) is rendered in Japanese as *魔道祖師* (madō soshi), and the translation of *天官赐福* (tian guan ci fu; Heavenly Blessing) corresponds as *天官賜福* (tankan shifuku).

Moreover, a notable proclivity within Japanese titles is the incorporation of explanatory elements. A pertinent illustration of this trend is observable in the translation of *罗小黑战记* (luo xiao hei zhan ji; The Legend of Luoxiaohei), transmuted into *羅小黒戦記* (rashōkoku), coupled with the addition of *ぼくが選ぶ未来* (boku ga erabu mirai; the future I choose). Similarly, the Japanese rendering of *时光代理人* (shi guang dai li ren; Link Click) appends the English title, *Link Click*, thus encapsulating the composite title as *時光代理人 -LINK CLICK-* (jikō dairinin).

3) Conclusion

Within the five categories outlined in **Figure 4**, the disparities are notably more pronounced in CN-EN as opposed to CN-JP. Concerning shifts in proper nouns and nouns during CN-EN translation, one can infer a higher inclination toward adaptation within the English titles' translation process. Furthermore, the extension of titles' length in both English and Japanese is apparent, serving as an additional indicator that the translation of Chinese titles adheres to the principle of domestication. With regard to loanwords, Japanese translations notably integrate a substantial proportion of Chinese characters.

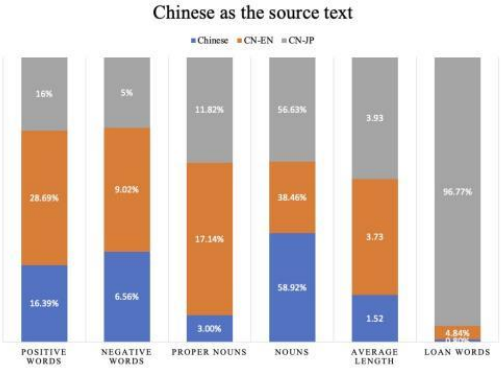

Figure 4. Chinese as the source text.

5. Conclusions

English's status as a lingua franca is clearly manifested in the field of considerable research on the translation of film titles. This characteristic has come to light within the scope of this research, as seen in examples like the direct use of English vocabulary or loanwords in Japanese titles and the predominance of transliteration as the main method for EN-JP translation, as well as the significant percentage of loan words in EN-CN translation (see **Figure 5**).

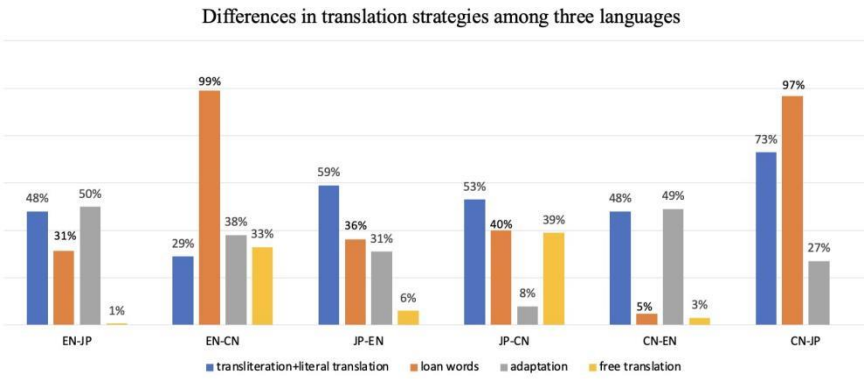

Figure 5. Differences in translation strategies among three languages.

An examination of Venuti's domestication and foreignization theory illuminates that the research into the translation of animation titles also unveils the asymmetry inherent in cultural exchange. When considering the impact of Japanese animation in both Chinese and English-speaking nations, this disparity is very remarkable. A clear trend of foreignization appears in translating Japanese animated films. For instance, the practice of foreignization, as expressed by transliteration, is highly common during the translation of Japanese titles into English, with a comparatively low occurrence of free translation. The English language has been enriched by a multitude of culture-specific items as a result of this phenomenon, many of which have gained widespread usage, including "origami", "bonsai", "sudoku", and "kimono". Even though some titles, like "Konosuba", may have looked strange to their intended audiences when first translated, over time, they have come to be well-known among English anime fans. As for translating Japanese titles into Chinese, though free translation plays a big role, literal translations show signs of foreignization that they are Japanese-style expressions, some of which have been used in daily conversations in China. Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that in the field of animation, Japanese has a similar influence as English as a lingua franca, or possesses an even more powerful status when it comes to languages involving kanji characters, such as Chinese, or possibly Korean.

This variance in translation strategies, influenced by cultural and historical backgrounds, can be attributed to the disparities in the development and acceptance of Chinese animation in the English-speaking world compared to Japan's established influence. There are also differences in the levels of engagement, communication, and familiarity between the English-speaking world and China due to historical, political, and cultural issues. The notable contrast between EN-CN and CN-EN translations lies in the pronounced prevalence of domestication in EN-CN translations, a phenomenon explicable by the existing cultural power dynamics (see **Figure 6**). Also, the existing data on creative adaptation and free translation shows the integration of the translation within the cultural symbols and conventions of the target language (Kaneeva and Bagdasaryan, 2021).

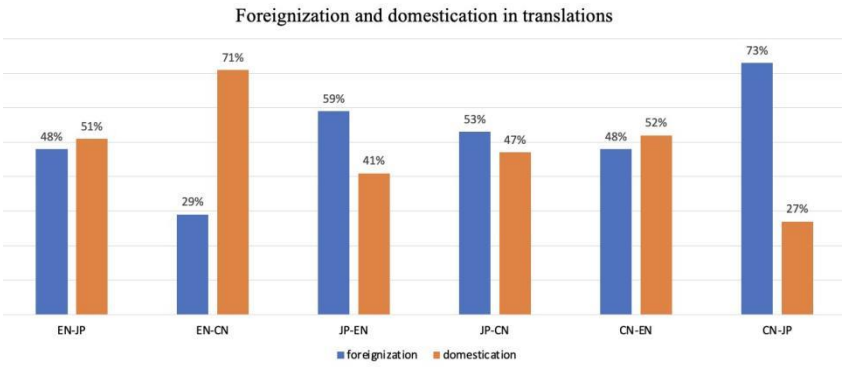

Figure 6. Foreignization and domestication in translations.

Within EN-CN translation, a significant reliance on loanwords is observed (see **Figure 5**). Free translation, however, also highlights several qualities that are specific to Chinese titles. This is especially evident when adjectives or occupations are used before people's names or location names. The prevalence of loanwords in title translations into Chinese (40% in JP-CN translation and 99% in EN-CN translation) underlines the popularity and acceptance of both English and Japanese animations in the Chinese animation market. The high percentage of loanwords in CN-JP translation (97%) is attributed to the interchangeability of kanji characters between both languages, leading to a propensity for direct adaptation. Despite the fact that 63% of Japanese titles incorporate English words, 31% of EN-JP

translations feature loanwords. Considering the popularity of English animations in Japan, this overly high percentage of loan words/foreignization strategy in CN-JP translation prompts an intriguing question regarding whether Chinese animations receive adequate attention and effort in their Japanese translations. Meanwhile, there is a discernible trend towards simplification and a stronger inclination towards domestication in CN-EN translation. This includes instances of overlooking or simplifying culture-specific elements and employing Japanese pronunciation for Chinese titles in English translations.

In conclusion, the study of translations of animation titles in English, Japanese, and Chinese highlights the dynamic interaction between linguistic techniques and cultural influences. This analysis sheds light on the complex interrelationships between languages and cultures as well as the crucial function translation serves in promoting intercultural communication both within the field of animation and beyond. This investigation helps us understand the intricacies of language and cultural interactions better, highlighting the continuous importance of translation studies in a society that is becoming more interconnected on a worldwide scale.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, software, formal analysis, resources, data curation, writing—original draft preparation, QG; writing—review and editing, investigation, visualization, supervision, project administration, LY. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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