

Translation of Hollywood Film Titles: Implications of Culture-Specific Items in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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Introduction

The quality of Hollywood film title translations has captured the attention of scholars and the society. In the recent decade, commentaries on different translations of Hollywood film titles flourish in television shows (Jimmy Kimmel Live), in magazines (Hong Kong 01), on online social media (Kknews, 2017) and in academic articles (Geng & Wei; Kim). Specifically, differences in the Chinese translations of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, lead to further confusion on whether the three regions have the same language (Kknews, 2019). Media suggested that people in these regions have a hard time understanding or appreciating the film title translations of the other two regions (Kknews, 2019). A demand has emerged for an updated, large-scale study on Hollywood film title translation in the three regions of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

This urge has continued especially since Mainland China has become the most influential Hollywood film market with the highest global box office revenue in 2018 (South China Morning Post, 2018): Are film title translations becoming highly distinctive in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan over time? If yes, what do the differences in translations imply? How are culture-specific items in film titles rendered into Chinese? Given all these questions, I conduct this research to investigate Hollywood film title translations from English to Chinese, with theoretical justifications presented below.

Importance of Film Titles

Titles are proper names of “cultural products” (Viezzi 184) and are the first and most crucial framing element of a cultural product (Zhang, 2013). Gérard Genette regarded film titles as powerful since they “control one’s whole reading of the text” by leaving readers with the first impression of a film (2). Sai-Hua Kuo and Mari Nakamura (2005) advocated the idea by regarding

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film titles as the information best recalled by readers, which have the potential to affect the use of information in later instances. Pou-Soi Cheang (鄭保瑞, 2019), a film director and scriptwriter based in Hong Kong, stressed the importance of film titles using a Chinese idiom “不怕生壞命, 最怕改錯名,” which means that one does not need to be afraid of having a wrong life, but should be afraid of having a wrong name.

Titles have three functions proposed by Peter Newmark as follows: informational, advertising and aesthetic. Although Newmark did not discuss the functions of film titles specifically, scholars advocated that film titles and respective translations serve the same functions as other titles, such as book titles (Peng; Wang).

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Domestication and Foreignization

Lawrence Venuti regarded translation as a decision process followed by translators, in which they need to choose among alternatives. These alternatives lie on “a slide of meaning in the transition from source language to target language” or “can be described as a simultaneous excess of target-language meaning and loss of source-language meaning” (1986, 182). All possibilities of target texts fall on a continuum between domestication and foreignization.

On the one end of the continuum, domestication is described as “the less awkward, unidiomatic and ambiguous” translation (Venuti, 1986, 187). Domestication is the “reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values” (Venuti, 1995, 20) and a “conservative and openly assimilationist approach to the foreign text, appropriating it to support domestic canons, publishing trends, political alignments” (Venuti, 1998, 241). Foreignization, on the opposite end of the continuum, is “a use of language that resists easy reading according to contemporary standards [...] this sort of translation, quite simply, will read as if it had been translated” (Venuti, 1986, p. 190). Foreignization restrains “the ethnocentric violence of translation [...] as a strategic cultural intervention” (Venuti, 1995, 20).

Venuti (1998) did not confine domestication and foreignization to any specific language features. Consequently, a number of scholars assigned the two poles of translation to translation methods: domestication shares various similarities with free translation, whereas foreignization has

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numerous common attributes with literal translation (Wang, Yin). According to Fade Wang:

Literal translation and foreignisation lay more emphasis on the linguistic and stylistic features of the original text, and the target text translated in these ways may not be very clear and coherent in language and the content may not be easy to understand for the target readers, so they may feel a bit strange when reading the translation; whilst free translation and domestication are more about the target audience [...] because of the smooth sentences, the familiar expressions and cultural phenomena [...] the target readers may not be aware [...] that they are actually reading a translated text from another culture. (2425)

As explained by Wang, literal translation is classified as foreignization, whereas free translation is considered domestication. Sharing a similar viewpoint, Lu Yin assigned translation methods, including transliteration and literal translation, to “showing respect for the original title” (i.e., foreignization), whereas adaptation and free translation are assigned to “discarding the original one” (i.e., domestication) (2014, 171). Venuti stated how domestication and foreignization reflect power relationships: “any language use is thus a site of power relationships because a language, at any historical moment, is a specific conjuncture of a major form holding sway over minor variables” (1998, 91).

Translation of Culture-Specific Items

Culture-specific items, which refer to elements that are foreign in a target culture (Laaksonen), are often studied under domestication and foreignization. Mostly ideological, culture-specific items pose challenges to translators when no equivalent term exists in the target language. Javier Franco Aixelá delineated the dilemma as follows:

Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text. (58)

Similar translation problems have been addressed by Rafael Maticlo and Elaine Espindola (2011)

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when they analyzed the domestication and foreignization of subtitle translations in a television series. They classified culture-specific items into 10 categories: toponym, anthroponym, forms of entertainment, means of transportation, fictional character, local institution, measuring system, food and drink, and scholastic reference. They found that regardless of the categories, foreignization outweighs domestication in the translation of culture-specific items in subtitles.

The translation of culture-specific items in film titles was investigated across the world with different focuses. José Ruiz and Betlem Soler Pardo (2014) focused on the translation of cult film titles produced by director Quentin Tarantino. By comparing source texts in English with target texts in four other languages, namely, Spanish, Italian, French and German, Augustyn Surdyk and Anna Urban (2016) proposed that source texts are often preferred by the younger generation than translations when referring to films in conversations. Francisco Javier Díaz-Pérez (2008) investigated the translation of English puns into Spanish in film titles by exploring 75 Hollywood film titles and their Spanish translations from 1938 to 2005. With classified themes, the paper argued that some puns are rendered successfully. For the comedy genre, Surdyk and Urban (2016) analyzed over 1,100 comedy film titles from English into Polish. As humour is culture-specific, domestication was found to dominate the translation of comedy film titles. Wook-Dong Kim (2017) selected 11 American and French films translated into Korean and demonstrated how the film titles have been mistranslated in South Korea, and then American, French, Korean, Chinese and Japanese translations of the selected film titles were discussed.

Existing research on film title translation in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan is comparatively dated and small in scale. For example, Ying Peng found that although Mainland Chinese tends to be loyal to the source language, Hong Kong and Taiwan tend to “adopt a more flexible and domesticated strategy” (78). Twenty Hollywood film titles and their translations in the three regions were discussed, but the sampling size and criteria for categorization were not stated explicitly. Rui-Chao Geng and Jun-Yan Wei (2016) examined how “defamiliarisation” is used in Hollywood film title translation in Mainland China to make texts “unfamiliar” by creating novel expressions. Ka-Ian Cheang (2005) selected ten film titles and their Hong Kong and Taiwanese translations with the highest global box office revenues from IMDb each year from 1990 to 2002. In total, 130 film titles and target texts were analyzed by using Venuti’s theory on domestication

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and foreignization. Several translation methods were identified: adaptation, transliteration, literal translation, semi-transliteration and zero-degree translation. Hong Kong and Taiwan preferred domestication, and Taiwan's cultural identification was increasingly revealed in film title translation in the 2000s.

Glocalization

When deciding how to translate a culture-specific item, translators can make many choices according to the dichotomy of domestication versus foreignization. From a cultural perspective, the target text reveals glocalization, the opposite of globalization (Roudometof 122). The relevance of the concept of glocalization will be demonstrated in the translation of culture-specific items in film titles.

Localization refers to a situation in which locals are rooted to their situation/culture and adopt a closed, defensive posture towards other cultures. Locals have a strong sense of belonging to the country's dominant national group, local cultures and communities. Localized individuals "adopt the viewpoint of unconditional support for one's country, putting one's country first and protecting national interest" (Roudometof 122). On the other hand, cosmopolitans who manifest globalization adopt an open, encompassing attitude towards foreign cultures. David Held defined cultural cosmopolitanism as "the ability to stand outside a singular location (the location of one's birth, land, upbringing, conversion) and to mediate traditions" (58). Instead of being bound by territorial and cultural attachments and accepting a single identity, cosmopolitans transcend the boundaries of their culture/locale by thinking through the complexity of a poly-identity (Cohen 478–483). Nonetheless, "cosmopolitanism should not be confused with the negation of national identity—and vice versa" (Roudometof 122). According to Wayne Wen-Chun Liang, "imbalances in power relations may create an imbalanced cultural understanding," but "the development of globalization should contribute to the elimination of cultural barriers" (57–58).

Glocalization examines cross-cultural interactions in the form of dichotomies: whether to keep/forego local culture or to welcome/resist incoming culture. Localization can be upheld by choosing domesticated translation. By doing so, foreign (source) culture can be resisted. In contrast, by translating using foreignization, the source culture can be introduced to the target-language

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readers, and globalization can be promoted. Moreover, both glocalization and translation imply power relations: foreignized translation is a strategic cultural intervention, resisting ethnocentrism) and vice versa (Venuti, 1995). Similarly, globalization resists ethnocentrism (Roudometof). In sum, using glocalization to analyze the translation of culture-specific items in film titles can shed light on Mainland China's, Hong Kong's, and Taiwan's openness towards foreign cultures.

Research Objective and Questions

Given the lack of updated and in-depth analysis of Hollywood film title translation in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the objective of the present research is to investigate the translation of culture-specific items in those regions. Developed from the objective, the following research questions (RQ) are asked:

RQ1: Which are the culture-specific items considered when translating Hollywood film titles into Chinese from 1989 to 2018?

RQ2: In terms of glocalization, what implications can be drawn from the similarities/differences of film title translations?

This research only studies English-to-Chinese translations in Hollywood film titles in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Given that Macau directly adopts film title translations from Hong Kong (Li, 2019), the city is excluded from this study. As the earliest year of global box office data in IMDb is 1989, the present study starts the collection from that date.

This study is significant in several ways. Studying film title translation in those three geographically- and ethnically linked regions can provide updated information on the similarities and differences in language use, as well as demonstrate the use and status of English as a lingua franca.

Conceptual Framework

The present research adapted the framework from Matielo and Espindola, which is highly relevant to the translation of culture-specific items in film titles. The following changes were made: (1) Similar categories were combined. (2) Categories with less cultural specificity/instances were

ignored to focus on the similarities/differences of film title translations. (3) A new category, “social taboos,” was added as they are highly implicational and distinctive in some target cultures.

Table 1: Modified Framework of Culture-Specific Items

Categories	Definition	Examples (year of the film)
1. Toponym	Name of place or locality	Maid in Manhattan (2002)
2. Anthroponym and fictional character	Names of famous people or laymen	Bend it Like Beckham (2003); The Mask of Zorro (1998)
3. Forms of entertainment	Public shows, performances parties, etc., which bring amusement	Dreamcatcher (2003)
4. Means of transportation	Vehicles used to move people or goods from one place to another	Taxi (2004)
5. Social taboos	Divorce, sex, re-marriage	The First Wives Club (1996)

Methodology

A film title database was built in 2019 to compare the Chinese translations of Hollywood film titles in the three regions. The source texts (ST) were Hollywood film titles from 1989 to 2018 and the target texts were collected in Mainland China (TT1), Hong Kong (TT2) and Taiwan (TT3).

As the world’s largest film database of Hollywood films with an established history and authoritative background (Surdyk and Urban), IMDb was chosen for this study. A total of 2472 source texts were gathered. Their respective target texts were searched through different film title databases as indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Formulation of Film Title Database

	TT1 = Mainland China	TT2 = HK	TT3 = TW
Name of film title database	MTime	Play It Again (故影集: 香港外語電影資料網)	@movies (開眼電影網)

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Total number of film titles	2,471	2,467	2,472
Total number of characters	12,058	12,878	12,706
Average number of characters in a film title	4.88	5.22	5.14

The following platforms were chosen as they are more established than other local platforms and contain larger film title databases (Fei & Clover; Play It Again). This research conducts directed content analysis on the basis of the developed frameworks. The following steps were taken in 2020 to code the data in the self-built database (Table 3).

Table 3: Coding process of directed content analysis adopted from Hsiu-Fanf Hsieh & Sarah Shannon (2005)

Steps	Coding Processes of Directed Content Analysis
1	Code the data from the self-built database
2	Group data in each of the themes into categories according to Table 1.
3	Conduct peer debriefings and collect feedback from independent parties.
4	Regroup, reclassify or rearrange the coded data according to feedback in Step 3.
5	Confirm the codes, categories and themes after reiterative processes of coding.

In addition to the principal investigator, who is locally born and raised in Hong Kong, four other research assistants locally born and raised in the Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan were recruited to reduce coding bias. Among them, two are from Taiwan, one is from Hong Kong, and another is from Mainland China.

Findings and Discussion

Five themes of culture-specific items are explained below with typical examples found in the film title database. In the following sub-sections, the culture-specific items and respective translations found in the film titles are highlighted in boldface, with some typical examples explained in detail. Word-for-word back translation will be provided in brackets after each target text for easier reference.

Toponym

The most common way to render toponyms across the regions seems to be transliteration. As seen in Table 4, transliterations are in bold:

Table 4: Examples of Toponyms in Film Title Translations

Year	ST: US	TT1: Mainland China	TT2: HK	TT3: TW
2016	10 Cloverfield Lane	科洛弗道 10 號 (Cloverfield Lane 10 No.)	末世街 10 號 (Last Years Street 10 No.)	科洛弗 10 號地窖 (Cloverfield 10 No. Basement)
2014	Penguins of Madagascar	馬達加斯加的企鵝 (Madagascar's)	荒失失企鵝 (Scared Lost Lost)	馬達加斯加爆走企鵝 (Madagascar)

		Penguin)	Penguin)	Bomb Run Penguin)
2008	Nights in Rodanthe	羅丹島之戀 (Rodanthe Island's Love)	最後的初戀 (Last's First Love)	羅丹薩的夜晚 (Rodanthe's Night)

Most of the toponyms listed in Table 4 are transliterated in Mainland China and Taiwan, whereas adaptation is preferred in Hong Kong. This finding echoed Juan-Juan Wong's proposal that Hong Kong is the "most free" and "deviant" region regarding film title translation (2005, 50).

Anthroponyms and Fictional Characters

Mainland China appeared to produce the most faithful translations across the regions in terms of translating anthroponyms and fictional characters, with target texts being the closest to the meanings of source texts and retaining the foreignness of names. This means that the audience would immediately perceive the film as a foreign film. As Maticlo and Espindola suggested that anthroponyms are mostly transliterated and Mainland China fits this model. In comparison, Hong Kong tends to use mostly adaptation. The transliterations are in bold (Table 5):

Table 5: Examples of Anthroponyms and Fictional Characters in Film Title Translations

Year	ST: US	TT1: Mainland China	TT2: HK	TT3: TW
2018	Robin Hood	羅賓漢 : 起源 (Robin Hood: Origin)	箭神. 第一戰 (Jian Shen Di Yi Zhan—Sword King, First War)	羅賓漢 崛起 (Luo Bin Han Jue Qi—Robin Hood Towering)
2011	J. Edgar	胡佛 (Hoover)	J.艾德格 (J. Edgar)	強. 艾德格 (John Edgar)
2010	SALT	特工 紹特 (Agent Salt)	叛諜狂花 (Betray Spy Crazy Flower)	特務間諜 (Agent Spy)
2005	Elektra	艾麗卡 (Electra)	黑天使 (Hei Tian Shi—Black Angel)	幻影殺手 (Huan Ying Sha Shou—Fantasy Shadow Killer)
2002	About Schmidt	關於 施密特 (Guan Yu Shi Mi Te—About Schmidt)	薯麥 先生 (Shu Ma Xian Sheng—Schmidt Mister)	心的方向 (Xin De Fang Xiang—Heart's Direction)

2002	Like Mike	喬丹傳人 (Jordan Carrier)	下一站佐敦 Next Station Jordan)	小鬼魔鞋 (Little Ghost Devil Shoes)
1992	Hoffa	霍法 (Hoffa)	人間好漢 (Human World Good Man)	超級巨人 (Super Giant)
1989	Driving Miss Daisy	為黛茜小姐開車 (Wei Dai Qian Xiao Jie Kai Che—For Daisy Miss Drive Car)	山水喜相逢 (Shan Shui Xi Xiang Feng—Mountain Water Happy Together)	溫馨接送情 (Wen Xing Jie Song Qing—Warm Pick Up Love)

The biographical film *J. Edgar* is based on the life of FBI Director John Edgar Hoover. All the target cultures translated this name but in different ways. Mainland China transliterated *Hoover* (胡佛) only instead of translating the full source text. In Hong Kong, the letter “J” was not translated. This letter was retained in TT2, and “Edgar” was transliterated as “艾德格 (Edgar).” As Chinese-English code-mixing is part of Hong Kong culture (Wong, 2017), it may be the reason why “J” was retained in TT2. Instead of translating the initial “J,” TT3 transliterated “John Edgar” as “強艾德格 (John Edgar).” In this film title, three versions were adopted by the three target cultures to translate a single name.

Like Mike is named after the former professional basketball player Michael Jordan. The film is about an orphan who developed a talent in basketball after finding a pair of shoes owned by Michael Jordan. The source text “Mike” was translated into “喬丹 (Jordan)” in Mainland China and “佐敦 (Jordan)” in Hong Kong. Both target texts used Michael’s surnames (in two versions) instead of transliterating the source text. A pun was created in the Hong Kong translation “下一站佐敦 (Next Station Jordan).” Given that a Mass Transit Railway (MTR) station in Hong Kong is called Jordan, the whole TT2 may be associated with the Jordan MTR station by Hong Kong audiences. In Taiwan, “小鬼 (little ghost)” was used to refer to the orphan rather than Michael. The whole TT3 “小鬼魔鞋 (Little Ghost Devil Shoes)” sounds peculiar and novel, given that “魔鞋 (devil shoes)” is non-existent in Chinese. Probably, 魔 (devil) was used as a short form of 魔法 (magical) to refer to the magical events experienced by the orphan after finding the shoes.

About Schmidt is a film about the retired life of Mr. Schmidt: the resolution of his guilt over the death of his wife, his poor relationship with his daughter and his identity crisis through the

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adoption of an African boy. Mainland China transliterated the name “Schmidt” as “施密特 (Schmidt).” In Hong Kong, “薯唛先生 (Schmidt Mister)” was used. “薯唛 (Schmidt)” is a Cantonese term to describe someone who is dull, boring or old-fashioned. “薯” means potato and “唛” means mark, as “Q 唛 (Q mark)” refers to a quality mark, and “唛頭” refers to a logo or a label. The pronunciation of “薯唛” is also phonetically similar to the pronunciation of “Schmidt” in Cantonese. Thus, Hong Kong used the film title to relate to the source text and hint at the character of the protagonist. In Taiwan, “Schmidt” was not translated in the film title. Instead, “心的方向 (Heart’s Direction),” which means direction of the heart, was used to describe the state of the protagonist. Comparatively, TT3 is a more literary translation of this film.

In this section, Mainland China appeared to produce the most faithful translations, with target texts being the closest to the meanings of source texts. In a few instances, only the transliteration of the anthroponyms appeared in TT1, which is rare in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Forms of Entertainment

Different forms of entertainment were used as symbols or metaphors of another phenomenon in the source culture. Some symbolic meanings were easily interpreted by source text audiences, but not for Chinese audiences. Thus, these objects were not translated faithfully (Table 6).

Table 6: Examples of Forms of Entertainment in Film Title Translations

Year	ST: US	TT1: Mainland China	TT2: HK	TT3: TW
2008	College Road Trip	大學之旅 (College’s Trip)	大學生了沒? (University Student Yet?)	大學生了沒 (University Students Yet)
2004	Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story	瘋狂 躲避球 (Crazy Hide Ball)	屎波快閃隊 (Feces Ball Quick Sparkle Team)	鐵男 躲避球 (Iron Man Hide Ball)
1993	Pulp Fiction	低俗小說 (Vulgar Fiction)	危險人物 (Dangerous Person)	黑色追緝令 (Black Chase Arrest Order)

Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story is a comedy about a group of outcasts running for a dodgeball

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tournament to save their gym from being taken over by a large health fitness chain. Dodgeball is a recreational sport played between two teams. Each player has to throw balls and hit opponents, whilst at the same time avoid being hit. Dodgeball was translated to “躲避球 (hide ball)” in Mainland China and Taiwan. In Hong Kong, the colloquial Cantonese term was used “屎波快閃隊 (feces ball quick sparkle team).” “屎波 (feces ball)” is a Cantonese term, which is a vulgar way to say that the person does not play the game well. The second Cantonese term identified was “快閃 (quick sparkle),” which means to leave quickly like a sparkle. The meaning of the film title translation in Hong Kong is different from dodgeball. As a result, the highly domesticated TT2 leaves colloquial and down-to-earth impressions with Hong Kong audiences.

In sum, more adaptations were adopted in all regions to ensure that Chinese audiences can grasp the film type or plot after reading the target texts. The findings align with that of Matielo and Espindola, who also suggested that adaptation dominates in this category.

Means of Transportation

Means of transportations, though not many, were found in film titles (Table 7):

Table 7: Examples of Transportation in Film Title Translations

Year	ST: US	TT1: Mainland China	TT2: HK	TT3: TW
2008	Gran Torino	老爺車 (Grandfather Car)	驅. 逐 (Drive Out. Expel)	經典老爺車 (Classic Grandfather Car)
2006	RV	房車之旅 (Touring Car's Trip)	RV 災難日記 (RV Disaster Diary)	休旅任務 (Rest Trip Task)

RV is an anagram of “recreational vehicle.” It is a type of motor vehicle that includes living quarters designed for various lifestyles. Usually, RVs are used for long trips. RVs are more common in western countries where the majority of people have drivers’ licenses, and public transportation is not easy. The film was translated into three versions: “trip” was added in TT1, “房車之旅 (Together Car’s Trip).” “RV” was retained in TT2 in addition to a description: “災難日記 (Disaster Diary),” which means diary of disaster. In TT3, “RV” was replaced with “休旅任務 (Rest Trip

Task),” which means task of rest and travel. Traveling on an RV is a foreign concept to Chinese people, thus descriptions were given in the target texts.

Social Taboos

This section mainly discusses the translation of words or ideas that may be neutral in the source culture but are seen as social taboo in Chinese culture. According to Eli Leiber et al. (2009) and Charles Custer (2017), taboos in Chinese culture include sex, drugs, homosexuality and death. In particular, Chinese culture has a deep-rooted culture of avoiding sex-related conversations. According to Chun-Bai Zhang “whilst in the West people can discuss sex candidly, few Chinese people can talk about it without a blush. In fact, it is sort of a taboo to make explicit mention of sex in the Chinese culture” (2004, 186). The translation of words related to sex or intimate relationships in film titles is considered sensational. In the database, film titles including sex, divorce and second marriage are identified (Table 8):

Table 8: Translation of Sex-Related Contents in Film Titles

Year	ST: US	TT1: Mainland China	TT2: HK	TT3: TW
2016	Friends with Benefits	朋友也上床 (Friends also in Bed)	戀搞好朋友 (Love Make Good Friend)	FWB 好友萬萬睡 (FWB Good Friend Million Million Sleep)
2014	A Million Ways to Die in the West	西部的一百萬種死法 (West's One Million Way Die Method)	奪命西 (Take Life West)	百萬種硬的方式 (Million Way Stiff's Method)
2012	Hope Springs	大希望溫泉 (Big Hope Spring)	愛情回春 (Romantic Love Back Spring)	性福特訓班 (Sex Fortune Special Training Class)
2010	Easy A	緋聞計畫 (Scandal Plan)	緋聞計劃 (Scandal Plan)	破處女王 (Break Virginity Queen)
2005	The 40-Year-Old Virgin	四十歲的老處男 (Forty Years Old's Virgin)	男人四十癡居居 (Man 40 Stupid)	40 處男 (Forty Virgin)
2002	40 Days and 40	禁欲 40 天 (Jin Yu)	美色飢饉 40 (Mei)	停機四十天 (Ting

	Nights	Si Shi Tian— Forbid Desire 40 Days)	Se Ji Jin Si Shi— Woman's Beauty Starvation 40)	Ji Si Shi Tian— Stop Plane 40 Days)
1993	Made in America	美國製造 (America Made)	精子奇緣 (Sperm Romance)	精子也瘋狂 (Sperm also Crazy)

Friends with Benefits is a film featuring two friends who pledged to have sexual relationships without strings attached. Gradually, they fall in love with each other. The source text “benefits” refer to the sexual relationship. Adaptation was used in all the three target texts. TT1, “朋友也上床 (Friends also in Bed),” and TT2, “戀搞好朋友 (Love Make Good Friend),” hinted at the plot of the film and made clear what the “benefits” were. In Taiwan, the three capitalized English characters “FWB 好友萬萬睡 (FWB Good Friend Million Million Sleep)” were peculiar. By carefully comparing the source text with TT3, “FWB” was the abbreviation of the source text. By abbreviating the original film titles into new terms, TT3 appeared to be stylish and attractive. More Taiwanese audiences would be encouraged to watch the film.

Although the film *A Million Ways to Die in the West* features exotic scenes, the source text has no sexual implication. In Taiwan, however, sexual implication was used in the translation: “百萬種硬的方式 (Million Way Stiff’s Method).” “硬 (Stiff)” is normally used to describe things that are stiff or hard. When used together with “起來 (get up),” the phrase “硬起來 (stiff get up)” is a colloquial reference to the male sexual organ being stimulated. The official Taiwanese trailer of this film was called “限制級鹹濕預告-6月6日全台硬起來 (Restricted Level Horny Trailer—June to August Whole Taiwan Stiff Up),” which further suggested that “硬 (Ying)” in the source text refers to male sexual stimulation (Universal Pictures, 2014). Netizens thus criticized that “only people whose brains were infused with sperms can think of such title translation” (Universal Pictures, 2014). TT3 reads as if it was originally written in Chinese, thus domestication was adopted.

Hope Springs is a film about an old couple who, after celebrating their 31st wedding anniversary, decided to visit a renowned marriage counselor in the small town of Great Hope Springs. The film was translated faithfully to “大希望溫泉 (Big Hope Spring)” in Mainland China. The Hong Kong translation, “愛情回春 (Romantic Love Back Spring),” takes a conservative approach to reveal the plot of the film, which means to reignite romance. In Taiwan, the adaptation,

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“性福特訓班 (Sex Fortune Special Training Class),” suggested that the couple has enrolled in a special class to improve their luck in sex. The Taiwanese translations appeared the most open and sexually appealing. TT3 is highly domesticated as “性福 (Sex Fortune)” is a pun from the Chinese phrase “幸福 (Blissful)” in Mandarin.

Easy A is a film that uses a metaphor, which was named after a historical novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850), entitled *The Scarlet Letter*, in which the female protagonist was required to wear a scarlet “A” (which stands for adulteress) on her dress in public to shame her. Taking this idea, the film is a teenage comedy featuring Olive who lied about having sex with many boys at school. Her initial attempt was to help her friends, but it turned out to be a scandal. In the film, she was inspired by *The Scarlet Letter* and wore a red “A” on her shirt in school. She was humiliated by many people at school and finally admitted at the end of the film that she lied. In the Mainland Chinese translation, “緋聞計畫 (Scandal Plan),” and the Hong Kong translation, “緋聞計劃 (Scandal Plan),” sex was not mentioned. As in the source text, sexual content was not made explicit. However, Taiwan’s “破處女王 (Break Virginity Queen)” openly used the loss of virginity to promote the film. Olive was crowned the “queen” in TT3. Thus, the differences in translation showed the varying extent of openness to sex-related content in film titles.

The film *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* is another example. “處男 (virgin)” is a Chinese term to refer to males who are virgins. This term is neutral, but different connotations were added to the term in translation. In Hong Kong, the film was translated to “男人四十癡居居 (Man 40 Stupid).” The term *virgin* was replaced with a vulgar Cantonese adjective “癡居 (stupid),” which means stupid and silly. An additional character was added (癡居居) to strengthen the tone. “癡居 (stupid)” is a more vulgar and negative term than “傻 (ignorant)” or “蠢 (stupid).” The LiVaC corpus (2019) recorded 98.97% of the instances of “癡居 (stupid)” in Hong Kong from 1995 to 2019. Thus, this term was suspected to be exclusive in the region. Only Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong can understand the translation. The source text does not suggest that being a virgin at 40 is stupid, shameful or silly. However, in Hong Kong, such negative connotations are added. Comparatively, the film title translation in Mainland China, “四十歲的老處男 (Forty Years Old’s Virgin),” only added that being a virgin at 40 is considered “old (老).” The Taiwanese translation, “40 處男 (Forty Virgin)” has not added anything and remains faithful to the source text. The translation of *The 40-*

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Year-Old Virgin suggested that the Chinese have looser social restrictions for male in a male-dominant society. In Chinese culture, men would have lost their virginity by 40. If the virgin in the film title referred to a female character, then negative connotations may not have been added to the target texts.

40 Days and 40 Nights is a romance film about a man who pledged not to have any physical and mental attraction for women for 40 days and 40 nights. The film was translated to “禁欲 40 天 (Forbid Desire 40 Days)” in Mainland China. In Chinese, “天” is used to refer to a day. Thus, “nights” in the source text was not translated in TT1. In Taiwan, a colloquial translation was used, “停機四十天 (Stop Plane 40 Days),” which refers to male masturbation. Thus, “停機 (stop plane)” in TT3 does not refer to an aircraft but means to stop any form of sexual intercourse. Despite referring to the same phenomenon, the Taiwanese translation was much more colloquial and vulgar than TT1. In Hong Kong, the film was translated to “美色飢饉 40 (Woman’s Beauty Starvation 40).” TT2 is closely related to an annual event in Hong Kong called “饑饉三十 (Starvation 30).” Hosted by the World Vision, the activity gathered volunteers to raise funds by experiencing hunger. Volunteers shall not eat for 30 consecutive hours to commemorate those who starve in wars and natural disasters. This activity was called different names in different places. In Hong Kong, this activity was called “饑饉三十 (Starvation 30).” Thus, “美色飢饉 40 (Woman’s Beauty Starvation 40)” is similar to “饑饉三十 (Starvation 30)” to an extent that the protagonist needed to experience time off from sex. TT2 in Hong Kong is highly domesticated and reads as if the film was produced locally.

The film *Made in America* is about the daughter of an African American woman who begins searching for her biological father after realizing that she was conceived via artificial insemination. The source text hinted that the daughter is “made in America,” by an American male. The source text sounds metaphorical and did not mention sex openly. The film was translated literally in Mainland China to “美國製造 (America Made),” which did not mention sex-related content openly. However, in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the meaning of the source text was changed. “Sperm,” the male reproductive cell, has sexual implications with the main function to reach the female egg cell. This term was added the title in TT2, “精子奇緣 (Sperm Romance),” and TT3, “精子也瘋狂 (Sperm also Crazy).” Given such change, target audiences tend to expect something about sex

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in the film. The alterations were used to spark curiosity and interest among Hong Kong and Taiwanese audiences. By contrast, no sexual curiosity can be implied by reading TT1.

In sum, Chinese culture is known for being more conservative than the source culture (American culture) regarding sex, divorce or other forms of intimate relationships such as polygamy. These topics are often sensitive and prohibited to be promoted in public. However, the translations of social taboos have varying degrees of openness. Slight differences are found when comparing the target texts from the three regions. Under the rules of the Mainland Chinese government, social taboos remain forbidden in popular culture. However, for Hong Kong and Taiwan, more flexibility was observed in terms of content, language and word choices in media. Production companies thus use sexually or ethnically sensitive terms such as “精子 (Jing Zi—sperm)” to boost box office sales. This finding agrees with that of Mei-Fang Zhang (2013), who also proposed that Hong Kong translators seem to be bolder than their mainland colleagues when translating sensitive topics in films.

Discussion: Globalization Revealed in the Three Regions

Reflecting on the style of translating Hollywood film titles, table 9 summarizes the salient translation methods used in each theme of culture-specific item:

Table 9: Culture-Specific Items and the More Dominant Translation Methods

	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Taiwan
Toponyms	Transliteration	Adaptation	Transliteration Adaptation
Anthroponyms and Fictional Characters	Transliteration	Adaptation (code mixing)	Adaptation
Entertainment	Literal translation Adaptation	Adaptation	Literal translation Adaptation
Means of Transportation	Literal translation Adaptation (less localized)	Adaptation (code mixing)	Literal translation Adaptation
Social Taboos	Adaptation (more conservative)	Adaptation	Adaptation (more open and sensational)

While Mainland China introduced the source culture to mainland Chinese audiences via foreignization (e.g., transliteration, literal translation), domestication was also used to translate social taboos. Nonetheless, it was proposed that mainland China was more inclined towards localization, reasons being national and moral education as the greatest purposes of film title translation. According to the vice president of the National Radio and Television Administration, “media, films and television programmes are [...] the most powerful mediums to foster the construction of thoughts and morals” of young people (Xinhuanet). Thus, these programmes should “help young people develop patriotism and supreme character on thoughts and morals (優良的思想道德品格)” (愛國情操). Zhang, who translated numerous foreign films and programmes, explained the selection criteria of foreign films to be imported to Mainland China:

Politically, those films to be imported must not be anti-China and anti-Communist; culturally, they must not contain religious propaganda, pornography or violence [...]. In such cases, the translator will have to delete them or replace them with politically acceptable words. (2004, p. 191)

To monitor the quality of education provided by media, official documents, such as “中共中央國務院關於進一步加強和改進未成年人思想道德建設的若干意見 (English translation: Several opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on further strengthening and improving the ideological and moral construction of underage people),”

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have been released by the National Radio and Television Administration in Mainland China. Yuan Liu (柳媛, 2010) asserted the educational purpose by stating that good film title translation in the mainland should orient and stimulate the audience to strive for achievements. The General Administration of Press and Publication of PRC banned “sexually explicit language” (The Guardian, 2019), topics about sex and female lust (Su, 2006), English–Chinese code-mixing in mainstream media and vulgar slang (Calkins, 1998).

Hollywood film title translation in Hong Kong was the most localized among the three regions. Highly domesticated expressions were used to translate the film titles, which contrast sharply with the findings of Matielo and Espindola. Yet, such localization may restrict Hongkongers to access the source text and culture. The strong localization features of Hong Kong Hollywood film title translations contrast sharply with Hong Kong’s established image as Asia’s world city. Hong Kong may be a cosmopolitan place where East meets West, but it remains resistant towards foreign cultures in film title translation. With closer political and economic collaborations with Mainland China in recent years, film title translation in Hong Kong is prospected to experience a change and follow Mainland China in the long run.

Taiwan demonstrated both localized and globalized features. Some apparent globalization features can be found, as some source texts were transliterated and added to Taiwanese target texts (in social taboos). Social taboos were also translated in a more exotic and sensational manner. With a similar stance, Liang argued that Taiwanese translators’ tendency to foreignize translation was influenced by globalization: “Taiwanese readers are able to accept foreign elements when they read foreign literary works or translations” (62). It agrees with some scholars’ studies that Taiwan manifests multiculturalism by protecting different cultural identifications and upholding equality and mutual respect among different cultures (Tang, Li & Zhang, 2017). Wei-Yi Wang also supported this idea and stated that Taiwanese culture is “modernised” and “affected by foreign cultures like Japanese and Western cultures to some extent” (2010, 19)

Limitations and Conclusion

There are several limitations in the present study. First, generalizability. With western culture as the source culture, other films produced in Japan, Korea, India and other Asian countries were

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not included in the analysis. Moreover, other screen and film translations like film synopses and posters were not discussed. Comparative analysis of film posters and synopses in different regions can be directions for future research. Second, according to Ruiz and Pardo, “any classification is debatable, because it is derived from the standpoint and interests of each individual researcher” (198). Given the different analytical lens used in this study, film titles and their respective translations can be classified and analyzed differently.

In spite of these limitations, the findings in this study have produced important insights for future investigation into film title translation. By comparing three ethnically and geographically similar sinophone regions from 1989 to 2018 within the context of Hollywood film title translations, five themes of culture-specific items were identified and inferences made between the translations and sociolinguistic phenomena, such as a locale’s openness to social taboos and code mixing. The present research has also attempted to draw a more in-depth discussion by comparing the cultural inferences of film title translation through glocalization.

With education and political purposes in mind, the Mainland Chinese government and film title translators seem to have strived consistently to preserve the purity and standard of Chinese in domesticating social taboos, while also introducing foreign culture minimally via transliteration of proper nouns throughout the studied period. In comparison, Hong Kong was more creative by consistently adapting all categories of culture-specific items, especially through the choice of colloquial Cantonese slangs and even code-mixing. Taiwan has shown their openness to foreign culture by explicit, exotic translation of social taboos in film titles.

In 2021, the Hong Kong SAR government announced the increase in censorship on film examination and classification to safeguard national security (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government). With the measurements developing in step with Mainland China, it is expected that the translation patterns of Hong Kong will gradually diminish and align with Mainland China. Nonetheless, this study has shed light on the culture of the three regions from the 1990s to the early 2000s. The study may help train translation students in the tertiary sector and aid production houses to produce better film title translations in the future.

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