

Doctoral (Ph. D.) Dissertation

A Translation Study on Chinese Xiqu:
through the Case of *Silang Visits His Mother*

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A Translation Study on Chinese Xiqu: through the Case of *Silang Visits His Mother*

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.....

Zhu Xiaohan

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Abbreviations

1sg: first person, singular

2sg: second person, singular

3sg: third person, singular

BA: preposition *ba* in the so-called ba-sentences

CL: classifier

le-ASP: perfective aspect marker

NEG: negation

MP: modal particle

LOC: locative

S: speaker

SFP: sentence-final particle

zai-ASP: progressive aspect marker

guo-ASP: past perfective aspect marker

P: possessive

Pre: preposition

PRT: particle

Glosses: the word-by-word translation

LT: literal translation

FT: free translation

AT: abridged translation

BT: borrowing translation

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background and aim of the study

Xiqu, known as traditional Chinese opera or Chinese theater, is a quintessential art form in China and serves as a typical representation of Chinese culture. Xiqu performers are among the most diverse and highly-skilled performing artists, rigorously trained in song, speech, acting, dance, acrobatics, and martial arts, and able to perform these skills in combination with one another. It is different from European opera, the performance of which involves a combination of singing and dancing, while the artistic structure of Xiqu is made up of the comprehensive application of Singing, Speaking, Dance-acting, and Combat¹. Therefore, some arts reviewers argue that using “opera” as the English translation for Xiqu is, in itself, a form of cultural colonization², and suggest that it is an analogy of the form of Xiqu to opera in European culture, which would put Xiqu productions in a very awkward position (Jia 2019: 22). Considering the distinctiveness of this art form, it would be more appropriate to use the Chinese Pinyin transcription, “Xiqu”, as its translation in English. As Wichmann mentioned in Huang’s interview with her, Xiqu is often called “opera”, but it is very different from Western opera, so to use “opera” or “theater” to describe Xiqu is a misunderstanding of it (Huang 2019).

There are more than 300 forms of Xiqu in China; the differences between each other include the language (dialect), musical style, regional cultural background, and so on. The previously mentioned Jingju is one form of Xiqu. Xiqu is an excellent representative of traditional Chinese culture, and in today’s multicultural world, the promotion of Xiqu is an important task for many. Xiqu, however, faces language and cultural barriers in its dissemination. I chose Xiqu as the corpus for my translation research because Xiqu translation is a unique and challenging task. It involves the transformation of oral expressions into written form, encompassing numerous culturally loaded words and expressions³. Xiqu includes rich cultural content, such as proverbs, idioms, poetry, and intricate character relationships; it can be seen as a condensed

¹ <https://www.librarieshawaii.org/event/xiqu-fights-delights-three-chinese-comedies/>

² <http://www.artscritics.hk/?a=doc&id=597>

³ Culturally loaded words and expressions are the words or expressions that are deeply rooted in the source culture and often have no direct equivalents in the target culture. These words usually carry specific cultural, historical, religious, social, or political connotations. It has different terms: Cultural words (Newmark 1988), culture-specific items (Aixelá 1996), culture-loaded words (Liu 1999); all these terms express the same meaning, represent the same group of words/expressions. Here, in this dissertation, the term *culturally loaded words and expressions* will be used consistently.

representation of Chinese culture, requiring a comprehensive set of translation solutions to handle effectively. Currently, there are few studies of Xiqu translations, and only a handful of Xiqu have been translated into English. This is because Xiqu translation is difficult due to cultural and specialized vocabulary, among other hurdles, and there is no systematic translation solution to use.

This dissertation aims to overcome the barriers discussed above, to study the English translation of Xiqu, and to explore whether an overall set of translation solutions can be applied to Xiqu translation, as it would facilitate the promotion of this art form. This research presents a series of case studies focusing on the issue of Xiqu translation, a subject that has received limited scholarly attention so far. The analysis primarily argues for going beyond the literal translation of the text and delving into how the cultural nuances and emotional aspects conveyed in the original text can be equivalently expressed in English. In the final analysis step of each case study, I will summarize and synthesize the research findings while standardizing relevant terminology and presenting a systematic overview of key terms. This overview will be based on Pym (2016a)'s solutions, unifying the terminology from individual case studies to align with a more general translation framework. This standardization represents a significant advancement in the study of Xiqu translation. By establishing a standardized terminology system, we can not only facilitate a more systematic discussion of Xiqu translation but also enhance our understanding and application of translation solutions. This will increase the general applicability of research findings and provide a more solid theoretical foundation for future studies in this field.

1.2. Research question of the study

The research question of this dissertation is: in the English translation of Chinese Xiqu, is it possible to construct and apply a systematic set of translation solutions that can faithfully convey the cultural connotations and emotional nuances of the original work? Specifically, this study summarizes such a set of translation solutions through an analysis of various culturally specific terms in Xiqu, such as the translation of Modal Particles, body part expressions, and four-character idioms.

It is worth noting that the translation challenges addressed in this study—such as Modal Particles, body-part expressions, and idioms—are not exclusive to the specific Xiqu text under analysis, but are common across Xiqu script translation and, more broadly, in the translation of literary texts. What distinguishes Xiqu as a particularly compelling focus is the high frequency and density of such linguistic elements, which stem from its dialogue-driven form and deep embedding in traditional Chinese cultural and rhetorical conventions. Although these may be considered general issues in literary translation, examining them through the lens of Xiqu allows for a more nuanced understanding of their manifestations within a highly culture-bound genre. This typology of solution, which will be presented in this dissertation, not only sheds light on the specific translational demands of Xiqu but also offers broader insights into how culturally loaded words and expressions can be effectively negotiated in translation practice. Hence, the use of Xiqu as a case study contributes both to the field of Xiqu translation and to the broader discourse on translating culture-specific elements in literature.

1.3. Significance of the study

The needs of cultural exchange. As a comprehensive art form, Chinese Xiqu differs significantly from European opera. Doing good translations can introduce this unique art form to international audiences, fostering intercultural communication and contributing to cross-cultural studies with profound significance.

Enriching academic research. Although some scholars (Fang 2004, Li 2023, etc.) have explored the translation of Chinese Xiqu from various perspectives, such as translation aesthetics and functional translation theory, the research in this field remains insufficient overall. This is primarily reflected in Xiqu's research, which nowadays lacks a comprehensive theoretical framework. As Chinese Xiqu gains increasing prominence in international cultural exchange, establishing a more standardized and systematic research framework for Xiqu translation has become important. Xiqu translation provides valuable materials for the world to study traditional Chinese art and culture. For instance, translation can aid linguists in examining the linguistic style of Xiqu and help literature enthusiasts analyze its narrative structures. It also offers new challenges and opportunities for both translation theory and practice.

1.4. Corpus

In this dissertation, one famous Xiqu, which is also a Jingju (the term “京剧 Jingju”⁴, known as Peking opera, is translated as Jingju for similar reasons as Xiqu), *Silang Visits His Mother*, serves as the corpus. This Xiqu has existed on the stage at different times since the birth of Jingju. Therefore, the history of the performance of *Silang Visits His Mother* is almost equal to the history of Jingju, with a history of more than 200 years (Wu 2019: 70). This is a very famous and frequently presented Jingju. It is widely sung by the public in China.

The story of *Silang Visits His Mother* takes place during the Northern Song Dynasty in China (960-1127 AD). In the battle of Golden Sands Beach, the Yang family suffered heavy casualties. Yang Yanhui (Yang Silang), the fourth son of the Yang family, was captured by the enemy Liao and later married to the Liao princess Tiejing. Fifteen years later, the Liao general Xiao Tianzuo carried out a large military operation near the border, and Yang Yanhui’s mother came to the border from the other side. Silang wanted to visit his mother because he missed her, and his wife, Princess Tiejing, helped Silang steal the arrow of command to cross the border to visit his mother. Empress Dowager Xiao discovered Silang’s absence, and after he returned to Liao, Xiao wanted to have him executed. Princess Tiejing begged her mother to save her husband’s life, and Silang was finally forgiven.

The Xiqu *Silang Visits His Mother* comprises approximately 7,500 Chinese characters and features numerous translation problems. For this study, I analyze two English translations of the text. The first translation, which I refer to as **Translation 1**, consists of approximately 11,300 English words and was produced collaboratively by a group of Xiqu theorists, artists, and translators both within and outside China, and was edited by Sun Ping (2012). This translation is part of the renowned *English Translation Series of a Hundred Peking Opera Classics* series. The second translation, referred to in this dissertation as **Translation 2**, was completed by A.C. Scott (1967), a pioneer in the study of Chinese and Japanese theatre. His translation in *Traditional Chinese Plays: Ssu Lang Visits His Mother*, contains approximately

⁴ Jingju (also known as Peking Opera) is a form of Chinese Xiqu. It developed in the late 18th century and became the dominant Xiqu form in the Qing dynasty and the early 20th century. Jingju uses a more standardized pronunciation influenced by Mandarin (official Chinese).

23,000 English words. The substantial difference in length is attributed to Scott's extensive use of compensation. He provides detailed descriptions of the actors' on-stage movements between lines of dialogue, ensuring a thorough explanation of the performance for readers.

Silang Visits His Mother contains a wealth of character dialogues that, while presented in written form, reflect spoken language and include extensive emotional expressions. The Xiqu is rich in vocabulary imbued with Chinese cultural significance, such as terms that convey hierarchical relationships between characters. These cultural elements present challenges in translation, requiring careful consideration to convey their cultural connotations effectively. This is why I selected this Xiqu as the corpus for my study. Translating Xiqu is essentially a process of recreating traditional Chinese culture. The core challenge lies in presenting the cultural essence embedded in Xiqu to readers or audiences in other languages. This difficulty is also the focus of my research, where I aim to address these translation issues by proposing suitable translation solutions.

1.5. Structure of the dissertation

Chapter Two focuses on the literature review of Xiqu translation. It provides an overview of the development of Xiqu translation and the research in this field. The chapter discusses commonly employed theoretical frameworks in Xiqu translation studies and examines how Xiqu is frequently analyzed from various perspectives, such as Skopos theory, relevance theory, and translation aesthetics. Research on translation solutions and strategies has been a key focus within these perspectives. I provide a comprehensive review of studies on translation solutions, categorized into several aspects: the translation of Xiqu in the form of an original literary classic, in the form of stage subtitles, in the form of TV and film subtitles, and in the form of stage performance. Additionally, since this study primarily investigates translation solutions, I dedicate a separate section to a detailed discussion of translation solutions as part of the literature review.

Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six are case studies and discussions.

Chapter Three specifically explores translation solutions for modal particles in Chinese Xiqu. A general translation problem can be detected between English and Chinese concerning

the so-called Modal Particles (MPs). This problem is because Chinese has a vibrant system of MPs; English, on the contrary, is regarded by most linguists as a language without a separate group of MPs. The six common MPs in Chinese are 的 (de), 了 (le), 么 (me), 呢 (ne), 吧 (ba), and 啊 (a). They usually indicate the speaker's attitudinal and emotive tone, and they occur at the end of sentences in most cases. The use of MPs in Chinese is widespread, especially in spoken communication. This chapter addresses this translation problem for the Chinese MPs when translating Chinese Xiqu. It is worth taking a Chinese Xiqu text as a basis for investigating translation solutions adopted for MPs because Chinese Xiqu texts involve many dialogues performed on stage. Therefore, they are, in some sense, oral dialogs. I demonstrate that several translation solutions include omission, linguistic amplification, explicitation, and changing semantic focus that are used in translating MPs.

Chapter Four studies the solutions of translating body-part expressions in Chinese Xiqu. It also discusses the cultural differences in the functions and meanings of body-part expressions between Chinese and English. It was found that the difference in the way of thinking between Chinese and English causes different understandings of the functions of body-part expressions. Hence, most body-part expressions need specific solutions for translation. Through the analysis of examples in Xiqu, there will be three types of translation, named 1-1 translation, 1-X translation, and 1-null translation. Pym's (2016a) terminology of translation solutions will be used as the framework to deal with these types of situations. It is shown that, even though body-part metaphors exist in both languages, the meanings and functions are different. It is difficult to find a one-to-one solution when translating, so it is necessary to understand the culture, to reformulate the meaning of the culturally loaded words and expressions in the sentence into English, and then find reasonable solutions for the meaning.

Chapter Five examines the translation of four-character idioms in Xiqu. Idioms appear regularly in Xiqu, among which four-character idioms are typical representatives of Chinese culture, expressing specific meanings with fixed forms and structures in common sayings. The research is based on my corpus and studies English translations of Chinese four-character idioms. In this chapter, the translation solutions of idioms in Xiqu are studied. Through the analysis of examples, it is found that four translation solutions (Wang and Wang 2013) are

preferred in translating: literal translation, free translation, abridged translation, and borrowing translation. The analysis of these foundational solutions highlights the importance of addressing both semantic content and structural differences when translating idioms between Chinese and English.

Chapter Six delves into the translation challenges of Xiqu subtitles. I present a case study that examines the challenges and solutions encountered in translating Chinese Xiqu subtitles. Building upon the model proposed by Qian and Feng (2021), the study investigates solutions applicable to translating Chinese Xiqu subtitles, finding that Xiqu subtitle translation must streamline the language to ensure that audiences can understand the important content in a short period. 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 the semantic focus to highlight specific aspects. 3) When dealing with culturally loaded words and expressions, 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.

Since these case studies are based on various translation solutions, at the end of each chapter, I have systematically summarized the translation methods employed in the preceding case studies, unifying them according to Pym's (2016a) framework. For the translation solutions in Pym's framework that do not appear in the chapters of case studies (modal particles, body parts words and expressions, and four-character idioms), **Chapter Seven** attempts to explore whether Pym's table of other solution types can also be effectively applied to Xiqu translation and to identify any solutions used in Xiqu translation that are not included in his typology. This chapter not only refers to Pym's classification but also supplements it by studying Xiqu translation, which in itself provides originality and new insights. This further enhances the main contribution of my dissertation by presenting a set of translation solutions specifically designed for Xiqu translation. In the following chapter, I will examine translation results from another perspective: machine and AI translation.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation (MT) has undeniably impacted the field of translation. Given the various challenges inherent in Xiqu translation, a key question arises: Can AIs and MTs contribute to the advancement of Xiqu translation? **Chapter Eight** will explore this question through a series of tests. By comparing high-quality human translation (Translation1) with results from trained Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and GPT models, this chapter aims to evaluate the potential of AI-assisted translation in addressing the unique challenges of Xiqu translation. The evaluation process adopts a multidimensional approach that considers not only fidelity to the original meaning but also the preservation of Xiqu's artistic expression, emotional nuances, and cultural significance.

Chapter Nine concludes the dissertation by summarizing the contributions of this research and the findings regarding Xiqu translation solutions. It also reflects on the study's limitations and outlines expectations for future research in this field.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Overview of Xiqu Translation

2.1. Milestones in Xiqu Translation

2.1.1. The early translation of Xiqu: 18th-19th centuries

In *A Compilation of Literature on the Western Translation and Introduction of Chinese Xiqu: 1731–1909*, Liao (2023) notes that during the Qing Dynasty, Western visitors to China encountered Chinese Xiqu and recognized its profound cultural and artistic significance, prompting a series of translations and studies. The first translation of a Chinese Xiqu into a European language appeared in 1735 when French Jesuit Joseph de Prénare translated the Yuan Zaju⁵, *The Orphan of Zhao*. Published in France, this translation caused a sensation in literary circles and fueled a wave of interest in Chinese culture in the 18th century across France and Europe. However, Prénare omitted the original music transcript in his translation, retaining only the speaking dialogue that conveyed the storyline and binbai⁶. Throughout the 18th century, other sinologists continued translating *The Orphan of Zhao*, including Thomas Percy, while some scholars revised earlier English translations, such as William Hatchett (1741). However, these translators often had a limited understanding of the core artistic essence of Chinese Xiqu, focusing instead on adapting the storyline. Through these adaptations, they introduced new themes to align the Xiqu more closely with European audiences' expectations (Wei 2023).

In the 19th century, following the Industrial Revolution, Europe and the United States experienced rapid development, prompting an influx of missionaries, diplomats, and others who traveled to China to launch journals and to translate and study Chinese Xiqu. Compared to the 18th century, Western translators' translation of Chinese Xiqu saw significant advancements during this period. These translators began to focus not only on the narratives but also on the musical transcript of Xiqu, aiming to represent them fully in translation. Additionally, Western translators deepened their understanding of Chinese Xiqu, incorporating its cultural significance into translations. Overall, Chinese Xiqu began to be more authentically represented in translations by Western translators during this period. In the 19th century, British

⁵ Yuan Zaju is a form of Chinese Xiqu. It has particularly been associated with the time of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)

⁶ Spoken lines in Xiqu.

diplomat John Francis Davis made notable contributions to Xiqu translation. In 1817, he translated the Xiqu *A Rich Merchant Distributed His Wealth to His Offspring* directly from Chinese into English, contributing the first direct translation of a Xiqu from Chinese into English for Europe and America. Davis criticized Prénare's earlier omission of the musical transcript, deeming it the most vibrant and culturally distinctive aspect of Xiqu. Recognizing the core value of these transcripts, Davis endeavored to incorporate them in his translation, advancing the understanding of Chinese Xiqu considerably. However, his translation still fell short of fully translating all the transcripts from the original Xiqu. In 1829, Davis translated another Xiqu, *Sorrow in the Han Palace*, but found it challenging to render the transcripts completely, as they contained unfamiliar historical allusions and intricate rhetorical devices. This experience highlighted the complexities of Xiqu translation, and Davis found that the translator has to make certain omissions in the face of numerous complicated cultural references.

In addition to the aforementioned translation achievements, the 19th century saw further contributions from British sinologists, including Joseph Edkins, who translated and published *The Borrowed Boots in Chinese Conversation*. Another significant contribution came from British scholar George Carter Stent, who published *The Jade Chaplet in Twenty-Four Beads: A Collection of Songs, Ballads, etc.*, which featured English translations of the Jingju *The Bend at Fen River* and *Yellow Crane Tower*. Overall, the scope and depth of translations of Chinese Xiqu in European and American countries expanded steadily throughout the 19th century, laying a strong foundation for developing Chinese Xiqu translation in the West in the 20th century (Wei 2023).

2.1.2. First English translation collections of Xiqu: The 20th century

In the 20th century, Mei Lanfang's visits to the United States and the Soviet Union further stimulated Western scholarly interest in Chinese Xiqu, marking the beginning of Xiqu's global exposure and sparking Western interest in its study and translation (Zhang 2021). During this period, Western translators sought to delve deeply into the artistic value of Chinese Xiqu, aiming to capture its theatrical appeal in translation. For example, American sinologist Lewis Charles Arlington (1937), together with Harold Acton (1939), compiled *Famous Chinese Plays*, a collection of 33 Chinese Xiqu. This work became the first comprehensive English text to

introduce and translate Jingju for Western audiences systematically. Arlington's translations aimed to convey the "spiritual beauty" of Chinese Xiqu rather than mere verbal fidelity; he sought to capture the essence of Xiqu's integrated performance style, which combines Singing, Speaking, Dance-acting, and Combat, rather than reinterpreting the source text. For Arlington, Chinese Xiqu was not purely literary; instead, it was a comprehensive theatrical art combining action, dance, and song, fundamentally belonging to what he termed "the art of the performer".

In 1962, American sinologist James Irving Crump completed the first full English translation of the Yuan Zaju *Li Kui Apologizes with a Rod*, written by Kang Jinzhi. This translation was published in the first volume of the *Monograph Series* by the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan. Crump's translation marked the first complete English version of this Xiqu available in the West, laid the foundation for systematic research, and set a model for future scholars. In 1965, Crump participated in a seminar at the Asian Theater Arts Festival held by the University of South Dakota, where he presented his translation of the Yuan Zaju *Xiaoxiang Rain*. This translation also represented the first English version of *Xiaoxiang Rain* in the West.

In the later 20th century, Western translations of Chinese Xiqu continued to follow the three main paths established by earlier translators, focusing on Jingju, Kunqu⁷, and Yuan Zaju. Notable examples include *Eight Chinese Plays*, compiled by British sinologist William Dolby in 1978, which includes Yuan Zaju such as *Duel of Two Physicians*, *The Wolf of Zhongshan*, etc., the 1980 translation of the Kunqu *The Peony Pavilion* by American sinologist Bai Zhi, and the 1985 translation of the Jingju *The Phoenix Returns to Its Nest* by American sinologist Elizabeth Wichmann Walczak. (Dong 2018)

The above examples highlight translations of Xiqu by foreign missionaries, diplomats, and sinologists, yet Xiqu translation is not exclusively the domain of foreigners. On the contrary, it is possible that Chinese translators proficient in English are more capable of capturing and conveying the cultural richness of Xiqu as they have the knowledge about Chinese culture. Yang Xianyi and Dai Naidie translated works such as *The Palace of Eternal Youth* and *The*

⁷ Kunqu is a form of Chinese Xiqu. It originated in the Jiangsu region during the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties and flourished in the Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1912) dynasties.

Peony Pavilion, as well as *Selected Yuan Zaju* by Guan Hanqing. They also translated modern plays from various regional styles, including the Jingju *A Fisherman Kills a Family* and *Legend of the White Snake*, the Chuanju (Sichuan opera) *Love Under the Willows*, *The Pavilion Beside the River*, and *The Forced Marriage*, the Kunqu *The Fifteen Strings of Cash*, the Pingju (Commentary opera, originated in Hebei) *Qin Xianglian*, the Jinju (Shanxi opera) *The Gold-Branch Honor*, the Minju (Fujian opera) *Refining the Seal*, and the Yueju (Cantonese opera) *The Search of the Academy*, among others. Wang Rongpei translated Tang Xianzu's *The Four Dreams of Linchuan*, having completed English versions of *Handan Notes* and *The Peony Pavilion*, among others (Cao 2011). China launched the *Library of Chinese Classics* in 1995, a major national publishing project featuring bilingual (Chinese-English) editions of Chinese cultural classics. This series, the first systematic and comprehensive foreign-language collection of Chinese literature, includes prominent traditional Xiqu texts such as *Romance of the Western Chamber*, *The Palace of Eternal Youth*, and *Selected Yuan Zaju by Guan Hanqing*⁸ (Chang and Zhang 2020).

2.1.3. The launch of Jingju translation series: The 21st century

The above English translations of Xiqu primarily focused on rendering Xiqu as literature for reading purposes. In the 21st century, however, more systematic Xiqu translations have emerged, such as the *Chinese Peking Opera Classics Translation Series*, officially launched in September 2011 and edited by Sun Ping. This project was a collaborative effort led by Beijing Foreign Studies University, Renmin University of China, and the University of Hawaii, involving prominent scholars such as Guo Hancheng, an expert in Xiqu history and theory, and Xu Yuanchong, a renowned translator in China. Numerous experts in Xiqu and translators worked together with a research team from Beijing Foreign Studies University, overseeing the English translations for the series. The corpus used in this doctoral thesis is derived from one of the volumes in this series.

⁸ <http://www.nopss.gov.cn/n1/2020/0214/c219470-31586798.html>

In addition to the practice of translating Xiqu into English, recent years have also seen the emergence of some studies on the English translation of Xiqu, focusing on translation solutions aimed at improving the faithfulness, expressiveness, and acceptability of Xiqu translations.

2.2. Research Framework of Xiqu Translation

Research on the translation of Xiqu has mainly focused on cross-cultural communication and translation for external promotion. For instance, Ling's study (2019) focused on the example of Yueju⁹ (Shaoxing opera) and analyzed the translation of Yueju's terminology. Ling (2019: 175) suggested that in translating Yueju, the role of the target language translator should be emphasized, seeking ways for English and Chinese collaboration, adopting domestication¹⁰ as a translation strategy, and leveraging the role of sponsors to achieve the best translation outcomes. Ling pointed out that there are specific issues in the current Xiqu translation, such as overlooking the cultural connotations of culturally loaded words and expressions, and inconsistency in the translation of Xiqu titles. In my research corpus for this dissertation, some culturally loaded words and expressions are translated with transliteration. However, Ling argued that this approach may prevent readers from understanding the cultural connotations, thus advocating for the use of transliteration combined with explanations. I share the same viewpoint. Transliteration is employed to avoid cultural colonization and maintain the original form of specialized terms, which means that this form of translation preserves the original flavor of the original culture without being replaced by other cultures. However, cultural meaning is also indispensable. Annotations such as footnotes or appendices can be used to provide the translation with explanatory notes.

Some studies aim to investigate specific translation issues related to Xiqu. For example, Zhang (2016) conducted a study on the translation of Xiqu proverbs using intertextuality theory. Proverbs play a significant role in Xiqu and are an important component. Zhang argued that intertextuality theory helps translate proverbs. Intertextuality views the translation as a

⁹ Although the Pinyin letters are the same, it is different from Yueju (Cantonese opera 粤剧). Here, Yueju (Shaoxing opera) in Chinese is 越剧.

¹⁰ Domestication is an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values (Venuti 2008:15), which entails translating in a transparent, fluent, 'invisible' style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT, which may involve a loss of information from the source text (Munday 2008: 225).

derivative intertext of the source text, and generally, the translation should reflect all intertextual relationships contained in the original text. Zhang (2016: 82) proposed that translation is a transformative activity involving intertextuality with language, text, and culture. Intertextuality in the translation of Xiqu proverbs not only entails identifying and conveying the literal meaning of the source text but also involves interpreting and explicating the cultural significance. I agree that proverbs are pervasive in Xiqu, which is full of cultural meaning. I also incorporate proverbs (idioms) into my research on Xiqu translation (see Chapter Six).

Cheng et al. (2024) categorized the current state of research on the translation of Chinese Xiqu into three main perspectives. The first is the linguistic study of Xiqu translation. They argued that, as a comprehensive art form, Chinese Xiqu translation requires focusing on its unique linguistic features when discussing translation strategies. The second perspective is that of translation aesthetics, where the use of rhetorical beauty can enhance the elegance and rhythm of the language. This approach is important for preserving the aesthetic value of the original Xiqu text. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to aesthetic theory to maintain the stylistic integrity of the original text. The third perspective is based on functional translation theory, which stresses that Xiqu translations should achieve functional equivalence by using the target language that best aligns with the original text.

Xue (2020), using *Xi Xiang Ji (The Romance of the Western Chamber)* as a case study, comprehensively explored the English translations of this work. She pointed out that the translation of the core concept of “Chinese Xiqu” is currently not unified. She believed this crucial and fundamental concept should be standardized as “Xiqu”. Xue analyzed various versions of the translation of *Xi Xiang Ji*, exploring the characteristics of each version. For instance, the translation by Henry Hart is an introductory, popular version that features moderate domestication while respecting the original text. Henry Wells’ translation, on the other hand, is characterized by its strong theatrical language, making it more inclined toward a stage play script. She also analyzed the culturally loaded words and expressions in *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, arguing that these terms reflect the difficulty of translating Chinese Xiqu into English: first, the understanding and translation of ancient classical Chinese into modern Chinese, and second, the vocabulary and meaning gaps caused by cultural

differences between China and the West. After comparing several translations, she proposed translation strategies for culturally loaded words and expressions: 1. When the cultural differences between Chinese and foreign cultures are not significant, a strategy of literal translation and addition may be used, where the literal meaning is translated, and additional adjectives, nouns, and other supplementary content are included. For example, *比目鱼* *bi mu yu*, ‘the flounder fish’ in Chinese classical literature, has a unique cultural connotation and is used as a metaphor for a harmonious married couple. The translator added “love”, rendering it as “love-fish”. 2. When the cultural differences between Chinese and foreign cultures are vast, a domestication strategy may be used to convert content with Chinese cultural characteristics into something the target language readers can understand. For instance, in *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, a metaphor compares longing to a mountain, using *Taihang Mountain* (a mountain range in China). When translated into English, the domesticated version replaced *Taihang Mountain* with *the fantastic range mountains* (Xue 2020).

In this subsection, I have provided an overview of Xiqu translation studies in general, offering insights into the history and development of Chinese Xiqu translation. However, current research on Xiqu translation remains relatively limited, with many more minor issues within the field yet to be explored in depth. In the following subsections, I will review these specific issues individually.

2.2.1. Xiqu translation theoretical framework

The research on the English translation of Chinese Xiqu extensively uses cross-cultural translation theories. When researching the Chinese-English translation of various Xiqu scripts or subtitles, various translation theories or relevant theoretical perspectives are employed, such as the Skopos theory (Tong 2021, Li 2015, Zhou 2011, etc.), functional equivalence theory (Huo 2014, Li 2022, etc.), and aesthetic reception theory (Li 2008, Ji 2012, etc.), among others. These theoretical frameworks serve as the basis for investigating various challenges in Xiqu translation, offering insights into strategies that address linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic complexities. By applying these theories, scholars analyze how to convey the complex meaning, artistry, and cultural essence inherent in Chinese Xiqu to the international audience. In this

chapter, a comprehensive review will be conducted on the translation theories utilized in research on Xiqu translation.

2.2.1.1. Xiqu from the Skopos theoretical perspective

Skopos originates from Greek, meaning “aim” or “purpose”. In the 1970s, Hans J. Vermeer introduced it into translation theory to denote the translation’s purpose or the translated text’s intended function (Munday 2008). Vermeer (2012) argued that the translated text must align with its intended purpose, and understanding both the source text’s purpose and the target text’s function is crucial for translators. In translating Xiqu texts, different purposes indeed result in varied translation strategies. For instance, Chang and Zhang (2020) analyzed the diverse translation strategies applied to the English translation of Chinese Xiqu for different purposes. Section 2.2.3 on translation solutions will provide a detailed review of their study.

Skopos theory is frequently adopted as an analytical framework in translating Xiqu. Based on Skopos theory, some scholars have conducted studies on the translation of Xiqu, analyzing how translation is approached from the perspective of this theory and evaluating its effectiveness (Li 2015, Zhou 2011, etc.). Certain researchers have even conducted experiments to test whether translations guided by Skopos theory are helpful for audiences.

Li Siqing (2015), from the perspective of Skopos theory, explored the translation of Jingju scripts and the performance effects of Jingju. To examine the performance effects of translating Jingju scripts under the guidance of Skopos theory, she led a research team to conduct an experiment in the United States in 2013. In this experiment, a video recording of the Jingju *Farewell My Concubine* was played in a multimedia laboratory for 21 native English-speaking participants. The performance was in Chinese, with two large screens provided: one displaying the Jingju performance and the other showing the English subtitles of the opera lyrics, translated according to Skopos theory. The results revealed that 76% of the participants could correctly identify the theme of the Jingju. Most participants reported that language and cultural differences posed the most significant obstacles to appreciating Jingju.

Additionally, 90% of the participants acknowledged the richness of elements in Jingju but indicated that these language and cultural barriers prevented them from fully understanding the

meaning of these elements. In another experiment, participants noted that they could only comprehend 50-60% of the plot without the translation based on Skopos theory. Li thus concluded that when applying Skopos theory to translation, the emphasis should be placed on achieving a similar response from target text recipients as from source text recipients rather than rigidly pursuing absolute equivalence of semantic functions. By adapting the translation to align with English linguistic and cultural conventions, the translated text can be made more comprehensible to the audience, thereby enhancing their understanding of Jingju.

Zhou (2011), based on Skopos theory, examined Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak's English translation script of *The Phoenix Returns to Its Nest*. Through an analysis of the translation skopos and the English translation text, Zhou concluded that Elizabeth Wichmann aimed to adapt the translated script for stage performance. To achieve this goal, she employed a series of translation strategies designed to meet the requirements of intelligibility, speakability, individuality, and aesthetic function. Regarding the translation strategies employed by Wichmann, Zhou did not establish specific terminology but instead used examples to illustrate the adjustments made by Wichmann in the translation process. For instance, when encountering allusions in Chinese Xiqu, Zhou (2011: 32) noted that Wichmann "removes the two unacquainted allusions and just translates the meaning", without defining this approach as "omission" or assigning to it any other specific term.

Many researchers conducting translation studies based on Skopos theory consider it highly important to discuss intelligibility. For example, Pang and Cao (2009), drawing from their experience translating the Chinese Xiqu *To A Feast Alone*, analyzed the application of Skopos theory in translating Chinese classical texts into English. According to Skopos theory, they argued that one of the most crucial factors determining a translator's purpose is the target audience, who possess specific cultural backgrounds and communication needs. For a Chinese Xiqu translated into English to be directed at Western readers or audiences, the translator must aim to introduce and make the audience understand the Chinese culture. When translating the script of *To A Feast Alone*, they emphasized that the intelligibility of the English translation was essential. Pang and Cao (2009) said that the translation needed to allow the audience to fully engage with and immerse themselves in the Xiqu's storyline, experiencing and

understanding the characters' emotions, including their joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness. However, it should also be noted that, given conceptual metaphor theory's view that different source domains highlight and hide different aspects of the target domain, when the imagery or cultural background used to express a particular emotion in Chinese is absent or differs significantly in European cultures, the audience may struggle to grasp the emotional experiences of the characters accurately. Therefore, translators need to pay particular attention to these cultural differences during the translation process and strive to convey the emotions of the original work in ways that are more easily understood in the target language, to help the audience better engage with the Xiqu context.

2.2.1.2. Xiqu from the perspective of relevance theory

In 1986, Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson proposed relevance theory, and its fundamental and core concepts are the cognitive environment and understanding of the interpretation of utterances. Relevance theory views linguistic communication as an ostensive-inferential process, wherein both parties in communication adhere to the following model: During the process of ostensive communication, the speaker strives to achieve optimal relevance by reasonably predicting the listener's cognitive context. The speaker omits information that both parties are already familiar with and deems it unnecessary to elaborate. Meanwhile, in understanding the utterance, the listener integrates the utterance into their cognitive context, fills in the details, and uses inferences to establish optimal relevance between the utterance and the context (Sperber and Wilson 1986). In 1991, Ernst-August Gutt, a student of Sperber and Wilson, proposed a relevance theory perspective on translation. Gutt argued that to achieve optimal relevance in translation, the translator must select the appropriate contextual assumptions from the potential cognitive environment according to relevance theory. The translator should infer the communicative intention of the source text author and, after considering the cognitive environment of the target readers, choose a translation suitable for the intended audience (Gutt 2004: 22-25).

Guo (2023), from the perspective of relevance theory, explored five translation methods employed in translating allusions in Chinese Xiqu *Chang Sheng Dian*: literal translation, literal translation with annotation, transliteration with annotation, amplification (adding explanatory

or contextual information to clarify meaning), and free translation (sense-focused, flexible, non-literal translation). Guo argued that the translator utilized these methods to align the informational intent with the communicative intent of the translation. When the communicative intent cannot be directly realized, the translator needs to enhance contextual assumptions or present the missing contextual meanings through annotation, amplification, or free translation. These methods established relevance within the translated text, ensuring the success of translational communication and enabling the Xiqu to enter the Western cultural context.

Chen (2024) argued that under the guidance of relevance theory, translators could adopt corresponding lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic strategies to enhance translation effectiveness and better meet audience appreciation needs. From the perspective of cognitive relevance, Chen analyzed the Chinese-English script of the Xiqu *Wen Zhao Guan* to explore the cross-cultural translation of Xiqu. He suggested that in Xiqu translation, translators should adhere to the principle of optimal relevance, ensuring an accurate understanding of the Xiqu script and the cognitive environment of the target audience. By employing methods such as context reconstruction, free translation, and cultural omission (deliberate removal of culture-specific elements), translators can effectively cater to the appreciation needs of an international audience.

Li (2023), from the perspective of relevance theory, analyzed cultural expressions in the Jingju *Farewell My Concubine*, such as Jingju jargon, Beijing dialect, and Chinese idioms. Through case studies, Li found that translators employed various strategies, including domestication and foreignization¹¹, to align with the cognitive environment of the audience. Li noted that when translating Jingju jargon, which often lacks direct equivalents in English, translators typically create a new context for the audience and find suitable expressions. Domestication through free translation is the most commonly used strategy in such cases. A similar strategy applies to translating dialectal expressions: translators first determine the meaning within the original context and then use domestication to find corresponding expressions in English. When translating Chinese idioms, domestication is preferred if there is

¹¹ Foreignization, contrasts with domestication, is to be a 'highly desirable...strategic cultural intervention' which seek to 'send the reader abroad' by making the receiving culture aware of the linguistic and cultural difference inherent in the foreign text. (Venuti 2008: 15-16) This is to be achieved by a non-fluent, estranging or heterogeneous translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator and to highlight the foreign identity of the ST (Munday 2008: 226).

an equivalent English expression. However, if no equivalent exists, translators often adopt foreignization strategies such as literal translation or annotation to convey the original meaning.

2.2.1.3.Xiqu from the perspective of translation aesthetics

The term “aesthetics” originates from the Greek word *aisthetikos*, which initially meant “perception by the senses”. The primary task of aesthetics is to study the aesthetic concept, with “beauty” being the eternal and unchanging standard of artistic works. In the 1980s, Zhu Guangqian, who is a famous translator in China, introduced the concept of “translation aesthetics”, asserting that “translation cannot bypass aesthetics” (Liu and Zhang 2011). Fang (2004: 296) described translation aesthetics as the integration of translation and aesthetics, applying fundamental aesthetic principles to analyze and resolve aesthetic issues in interlingual transformation. Translation aesthetics is a school of translation theory with Chinese characteristics and interdisciplinary features, different from the Western translation theory models (Li 2007).

Liu Miqing (2012: 256-269) made significant contributions to the study of translation aesthetics. He stated that the translation principle from the perspective of translation aesthetics is “aesthetic compensation”, which can be categorized into three types. Non-compensatory transformation, which refers to imitation based on the source language. Partially compensatory transformation, which includes target language-based imitation and dynamic imitation. Target language-based imitation emphasizes leveraging the strengths of the target language, while dynamic imitation allows flexibility in following either the source or target language, selecting the optimal approach. Compensatory transformation refers to reconstruction or rewriting, entirely freeing the translation from the constraints of the source language’s form and rewriting it according to the purpose of the translation to optimize the achievement of translation objectives.

As a form of Chinese culture with refined language and highly developed aesthetic artistry, Chinese Xiqu has attracted considerable interest from Chinese scholars of translation aesthetics analysis. Ji (2012) studied the English translation of the Xiqu *The Peony Pavilion*. She analyzed aesthetic ingredients in non-formal aesthetic constituents such as beauty in scenes, women, and

feelings, exploring how these aspects could be recreated for target-language readers. Through case studies, Ji demonstrated techniques such as the use of alliteration, rhyme, and symmetrical structures to preserve the original's graceful imagery. When translating Chinese descriptions of beautiful landscapes, she suggested employing positive emotive vocabulary in the translation to reflect the aesthetic sentiments evoked by the scenery in the source text. For instance, when depicting vibrant spring scenes, the translator employs positive emotive vocabulary such as "red", "warmer", "float", and "spiral" to reflect the aesthetic sentiments evoked by the scenery in the original text. Additionally, when dealing with Chinese parallel structures and reduplicative words, efforts were made to replicate parallel sentence forms and maintain rhythmic beauty in the target language.

Hao (2015) analyzed the translation strategies employed by Wang Bantong in his English rendition of the Xiqu *Laughter and Tears* to achieve aesthetic reproduction. For phonological elements, the translator utilized techniques such as alliteration, rhyme, repetition, and onomatopoeia to replicate the source text and recreate its auditory beauty accurately. However, Hao noted that when reproducing such phonological aesthetics was unfeasible, the translator prioritized conveying meaning and ensuring fluency in the target text. At the lexical level, given the frequent use of four-character expressions in Chinese Xiqu, which have no direct equivalents in English, Hao suggested leveraging imagery or dynamic elements to approximate and restore the effect of the original text in translation. For example, she analyzed a line from the Xiqu 岂有此理! 岂有此理! *qi you ci li qi you ci li*, which means "unexpectedly it has this sense". In the original Chinese text, the repetition conveys the speaker's furious and restrained state. The translation moves beyond the literal meaning, rendering it as "What impertinence! What imprudence!" to convey escalating anger, effectively capturing the nuance of the original. At the syntactical and paragraph levels, the prevalent use of rhetorical devices in Chinese Xiqu, such as parallelism, antithesis, and repetition, was addressed by identifying corresponding rhetorical strategies in English wherever possible. As for the non-formal system of imagery (the mood and style of the Xiqu, the images and touches that the words make in one's mind) that the Xiqu is trying to convey, she believes that the imagery symbols can trigger the same in the English readers, and literal translation can be used. However, for culturally loaded words and

expressions with no equivalent resonance in English, the translator should opt for substitution with familiar imagery through free translation to ensure the intended emotional and aesthetic impact.

2.2.1.4. Xiqu from the perspective of functional equivalence theory

Nida (1964a: 159) proposed the “dynamic equivalence” theory, later renamed as “functional equivalence”, which emphasizes reproducing the meaning, style, and other information of the source language in the target language using the closest and most natural equivalents. Newmark (2009: 30) distinguished between semantic translation, faithful to the original text’s discourse, and communicative translation, roughly equivalent to Nida’s functional equivalence, prioritizing the target audience’s comprehension.

Xiqu studies based on the theory of functional equivalence aim to optimize the bilingual reader’s experience by seeking a balance between literal and free translation, supplemented by annotations etc., in order to achieve the best possible integration of cultural expression and comprehension. For instance, according to Cao Guangtao et al. (2018), guided by functionalist theory, they analyzed English translations of a range of traditional Xiqu-specific terms and proposed three mainstream strategies: (1) Literal translation, such as for many standard stage props, e.g., the Chinese word 烛台 *zhutai* is translated as “candlestick”; (2) Liberal translation for names with cross-cultural accessibility, e.g., 软枪 *ruanqiang* is rendered as “flexible spear”; (3) Transliteration with notes for culturally loaded words and expressions, preserving the original form while providing explanatory context, such as 走边 *zoubian* translated as “zoubian (it is a kind of choreographed movements, displaying the actors moving from one scene to another while showing her or his information for the plot)”, thereby maintaining both cultural authenticity and audience understanding.

Li (2022) pointed out that Nida’s functional equivalence theory provides strong theoretical guidance for the English translation of culturally loaded words and expressions in Jingju. The core principles of the theory include the deep connection between language and culture, as well as the structural similarities shared across different languages, thereby establishing the translatability of culturally loaded terms. Based on a detailed analysis of three excerpted plays

from *The Hundred Peking Opera Classics*, Li identified and categorizes five main translation strategies for culturally loaded terms: free translation, amplification, annotation, omission, and substitution. She further emphasized that different types of culturally loaded words and expressions require the application of different strategies accordingly.

Specifically, for culturally loaded words and expressions in the ecological dimension—which include terms related to climate, landforms, and place names (e.g., 梧桐 *wutong*, which represents loneliness in Chinese culture)—translators tend to employ free translation and amplification. For culturally loaded words and expressions in the material dimension, most of which refer to culturally specific objects or materials in China (e.g., 鸾铃 *luanling*, the bells attached to warhorses or chariots), free translation and omission are commonly used. Culturally loaded words and expressions in the social dimension—such as honorifics and ritual terms—are often translated through a combination of free translation and annotation. For culturally loaded words and expressions in the religious dimension (e.g., 皇天在上 *huangtian zai shang*, meaning “heaven above”), the preferred strategies are free translation and substitution. Lastly, culturally loaded words and expressions in the linguistic dimension, such as Chinese idioms and sayings, are primarily rendered through free translation and substitution. In practice, translators must flexibly choose appropriate solutions based on the linguistic context of the script and the specific characteristics of the culturally loaded words and expressions, in order to achieve both semantic and functional equivalence. This enables overseas audiences to comprehend the content while also appreciating the richness of traditional Chinese culture.

2.2.1.5. Summary

From this section, the following summary can be drawn. Skopos theory emphasizes that translations should serve the needs and cultural background of the target-language audience, rather than adhere strictly to formal equivalence, which is particularly important for the cross-cultural transmission of Xiqu texts. As Pang and Cao (2009) pointed out, when translating Xiqu for Western audiences, translators must take into account the audience’s cultural competence and prioritize intelligibility, enabling viewers to become emotionally “immersed” in the characters’ experiences. Li’s (2015) experimental study further demonstrated that applying Skopos theory in subtitle translation significantly improves English-speaking audiences’

comprehension of the central themes of Jingju, with 76% accurately identifying the main message. This research by Li suggested that the theory is effective in enhancing cross-cultural reception.

While aiming for ease of understanding among target audiences, the cultural connotations of the source text are sometimes sacrificed. For instance, Zhou (2011) pointed out that Wichmann omitted two allusions unfamiliar to Western audiences; although this improved comprehensibility, it also led to a loss of cultural information. This risk of “cultural dilution” or “cultural downgrading” may weaken the deeper cultural value of Chinese-to-English translations of culturally rich texts. Li’s (2015) experimental findings also indicated that even when subtitles are translated using Skopos theory, audiences commonly report significant linguistic and cultural barriers, suggesting that the theory cannot fully bridge cultural gaps. Overall, Skopos theory may offer limited support for highlighting source-cultural elements, which raises questions about the suitability of this theory as a comprehensive framework for Xiqu translation.

Relevance theory provides an effective theoretical framework for the translation of culturally rich texts in Xiqu from Chinese into English by emphasizing cognitive reception and contextual inference. It encourages translators to flexibly adjust their solutions according to the audience’s cognitive environment, thereby maximizing communicative effectiveness. As Chen (2024) and Li (2023) both emphasized, translators should fully consider the cognitive context of the target audience and adopt appropriate pragmatic, lexical, and syntactic strategies to ensure that cultural information is effectively absorbed. Although relevance theory proves effective in terms of comprehension, its strong emphasis on reception effects may result in excessive domestication or the omission of cultural content, thereby weakening the expressive depth and representational power of the source culture. Compared to the explicit purpose of Skopos theory and the equivalence mechanism of functional equivalence theory, relevance theory is more abstract and philosophical. Its core concepts—such as “contextual assumptions” and “cognitive effects”—are often complex for practitioners to apply concretely. Therefore, applying relevance theory as a general framework for Xiqu translation may be suboptimal.

Translation aesthetics focuses on the formal beauty of language, advocating for the reproduction of the original text's imagery, phonological beauty, rhythm, and emotional expression in the translated version. This theory is particularly well-suited to Chinese Xiqu, which centers on performativity and artistic expression. However, the present study places greater emphasis on the translation of Xiqu scripts rather than stage performance. Therefore, elements highlighted by translation aesthetics, such as alliteration and rhyme, are not of primary importance in this dissertation.

The functional equivalence theory emphasizes the reception effect on target-language readers and aims to achieve a balance between the source and target texts. It advocates a "reader-centered" approach, where translation should not only convey the original meaning but also elicit a similar response from the target audience. Grounded in Nida's belief that cultures share common core structures, the theory provides theoretical support for cultural transfer between Chinese and English, thereby mitigating the issue of so-called "cultural untranslatability". Through appropriate translation solutions, it enables foreign readers to approach the cultural context of Chinese Xiqu better. Although functional equivalence theory offers strong practical guidance for the translation of culturally loaded words and expressions, its focus remains mainly on the linguistic level, emphasizing semantic equivalence and reader response. Therefore, it may not fully account for non-linguistic elements such as rhythm, tone, and tempo in performance-oriented texts, and its applicability to stage translations is somewhat limited. However, since this study primarily focuses on the translation of Xiqu scripts rather than stage performance, the theory's attention to preserving cultural connotations in the translation of idioms, sayings, and culturally loaded words and expressions makes it a suitable theoretical framework for the present research.

This theoretical review aims to demonstrate that many theories have been applied to Xiqu translation, each focusing on different dimensions such as function, relevance, or aesthetics. However, these theories are often concerned with abstract analysis and do not necessarily provide practical solutions to translation challenges—particularly those involving culturally embedded expressions. From the translator's perspective, the key task is not to engage in theoretical speculation, but to address concrete issues arising from the relationship between the

source text and the target text. This explains why I seek an analytical framework that can cover all cultural and linguistic dimensions. Therefore, although functional equivalence theory aligns with my translation purpose—that is, the transmission of cultural connotations—and I regard it as the theoretical guidance for my translation, translation does not require an overly theoretical model. What we need is a framework that pays attention to actual translation phenomena and is flexibly applicable.

Pym’s theoretical model offers a problem-solving perspective, bridging theory and practice, providing translators with practical translation solutions as references. I will analyze Pym’s translation solution type in detail in section 2.2.2.

2.2.2. Research on translation solutions

Translation research mainly focuses on translation theory and translation solutions. While translation theory flourished, specific translation solutions also gained attention. These “translation solutions” might also be referred to as “translation procedures” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958), “translation principles” (Loh 1958), “translation shifts” (Catford 1965), and so on.

Here, I would like to emphasize the translation procedures of Vinay and Darbelnet and the translation principles of Loh because these two scholars inspire the translation solutions I have adopted from Pym. In 1958, Vinay and Darbelnet proposed a series of “translation procedures” based on earlier work by Russian theorist and translator Andrei Fedorov. Their research involved a comparative stylistic analysis of French and English texts, identifying different translation “strategies” and “procedures”. They categorized the procedures into two main strategies: direct translation and oblique translation. These two strategies encompass seven translation procedures, with direct translation covering borrowing, calque, and literal translation, while oblique translation includes transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. Vinay and Darbelnet’s influential taxonomy continues to significantly impact the field of translation, helping to uncover various translation techniques (Munday 2008: 88-91). In the same year, Loh Dian-yang developed a set of “translation principles” in his book *Translation: Its Principles and Techniques*, especially applicable to Chinese-English translation (Loh 1958).

Six basic translation principles are included: omission, amplification, repetition, conversion, inversion, and negation. These six fundamental principles are further divided into more than 30 specific techniques (Loh 1958: 96-281). Overall, these diverse translation methods have contributed to developing translation theory and practice, providing valuable tools for translators to handle the complexities and cultural nuances in their respective translation tasks. Based on Vinay and Darbelnet and Loh, Pym (2016a) proposed a set of “translation solution types” with simple and understandable terms, see Table 1. This will be reviewed more in the following paragraph. Klaudy (2007) used the term “transfer operations” in her book *Languages in Translation*, with the basis of her translation operations being the structural description of the language. Her classification of transfer operations is systematic; however, it appears to be more a description of the translation process than a translation solution.

Pym’s translation solution types will serve as the basis of the solutions used in this dissertation. In 2014, Pym compared the translation solutions of Vinay and Darbelnet with those of Loh Dian-yang and proposed his classification. It was primarily prepared for pedagogical purposes. He suggested that the solutions concern many language pairs. He also argued in *A Typology of Translation Solutions* that, in principle, all solution types can be used to solve all problems (Pym 2018: 46). Then Pym verified it in *A Typology of translation solutions for Chinese- English* in 2020, which is a collaborative article by Pym and several Chinese students, and used this table on another Chinese corpus, which are everyday phrases in Chinese, so it has been tested that it can be used for dealing with the problem of Chinese- English translation. As Pym mentioned, this translation solution applies to all kinds of texts, but the list of sub-types is open-ended for more focused work (Pym 2016a: 221); thus, a set of translation solutions applicable to Xiqu translation can be developed to provide better guidance. In my research, I have modified Pym’s solution by introducing several additional translation solutions. I have also excluded the category of text tailoring to make the solutions more applicable to Xiqu translation. I will analyze the specific details of these solutions in the examples provided later in this dissertation.

Cruise mode (normal use of language skills, reference resources, parallel texts, intuition — anything prior to bump mode — so no special solutions are needed)		
Copying	Copying Words	Copying sounds Copying morphology Copying script ...
	Copying Structure	Copying prosodic features Copying fixed phrases Copying text structure ...
Expression Change	Perspective Change	Changing sentence focus Changing semantic focus Changing voice Renaming an object ...
	Density Change	Generalisation / Specification Explicitation / Implication Multiple Translation...
	Resegmentation	Joining sentences Cutting sentences Re-paragraphing...
	Compensation	New level of expression New place in text (notes, paratexts) ...
	Cultural Correspondence	Corresponding idioms Corresponding units of measurement, currency, etc. Relocation of culture-specific referents ...
Material Change	Text Tailoring	Correction / censorship / updating Omission of material Addition of material ...

Table 1. Translation Solution Types by Anthony Pym (Pym 2016a: 220)

2.2.3. Xiqu translation solutions/strategies

Translation solutions for Chinese Xiqu provide essential tools and methods for rendering the original works into a target language. Common solutions include literal translation, free translation, domestication, foreignization, annotation, omission, substitution, etc. Typically, the choice of solution is determined by the specific purpose of the translation, as different translation objectives necessitate different solutions. As described by Chang and Zhang (2020), the translation purposes of Xiqu texts generally fall into two main categories: for reading and for performance. Within these two categories, further subdivisions exist, such as original literary classics, abridged and adapted versions, stage subtitles, and TV and film subtitles. Each of these forms requires distinct solutions, as their translation purposes and intended effects differ (Chang and Zhang 2020).

This discussion adopts Chang and Zhang’s classification of text types to explore commonly used translation solutions. However, abridged and adapted versions are excluded from the analysis below, as they primarily involve modifying the original text into a simplified and comprehensible version before translation. Such modifications focus more on adaptation in the source text than on employing specific translation solutions in the target text.

Before delving into the specifics, I would like to clarify the distinction between the terms “translation strategy”, “translation methods”, “translation techniques” and so on. In translation studies, certain concepts are often conflated, such as “translation strategy”, “translation methods”, and “translation techniques”. For instance, domestication and foreignization are sometimes referred to as strategies (Shuttleworth and Cowie 2004: 44), while in other cases, they are categorized as methods (Gong 2011: 79–81). Similarly, different terminologies are used to discuss translation method/solution/strategy: some scholars prefer “method” (e.g., Vinay and Darbelnet 2000: 84–93), while others use “solution” (Pym 2016a). According to Oxford Learner’s Dictionary¹², “strategy” refers to a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose, while “method” is “*a particular way of doing something*”, and “solution” means “*a way of solving a problem or dealing with a difficult situation*”. According to Xiong (2021), although “strategy” is related to “methods and approaches”, it places greater emphasis on the macro-level “principles” and fundamental “schemes”—that is, the set of principles and plans adopted in translation activities to achieve specific translation purposes, such as “foreignization” and “domestication”. “Translation methods” refer to specific approaches, steps, or means employed within a translation activity based on a particular strategy to reach a given goal. Translation methods represent a generalized way of handling translation rather than concrete, localized techniques—for example, “literal translation” and “free translation.” By contrast, “translation techniques” are localized and micro-level; they are the specific skills and technical means used during the concrete implementation of a method, such as “amplification” or “omission”.

¹² <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>

The “translation solutions” I adopt from Pym closely resemble the concept of “translation techniques”, referring to the practical skills used during the translation process. While this literature review retains the terminology of each source (e.g., strategy, method), I have chosen to use the term “solution” to emphasize the focus on addressing challenges in Xiqu translation and proposing practical ways to resolve them. It is worth noting that the case studies draw on a range of theoretical frameworks, each employing different terminologies such as “methods,” “strategies,” and related concepts. In the analysis, I retain the original terms used within each respective framework to reflect the theoretical background faithfully. However, at the conclusion of each case study, these terms are unified under Pym’s concept of “translation solutions”. Not only are they all categorized as “solutions”, but the specific names of the solutions are also aligned with Pym’s terminology, in order to establish a comprehensive set of translation solutions to deal with translation problem in Xiqu.

2.2.3.1. The form of the original literary classic

For this type of translated text, Chang and Zhang (2020) stated that the target audience primarily consists of readers with literary expertise, such as scholars studying Chinese Xiqu. The intended effect of the translation is to showcase the literary and aesthetic value of the original work and disseminate the cultural essence of Chinese Xiqu. They argued that strategies like foreignization and intra-text annotations or footnotes are appropriate to use for such translations. These strategies enable a more comprehensive conveyance of cultural imagery, ensuring the cultural connotations are effectively communicated, thereby enhancing the fidelity and scholarly value of the Xiqu translation. Other scholars have expressed similar views. Qiu (2004) observed that in the English translation of Xiqu, particularly regarding culturally loaded words and expressions such as characters’ titles, puns, and allusions, the common practice involves literal translation plus annotations. Cao (2011) also emphasized that Xiqu translations should primarily adopt a foreignization strategy. The suitable strategy for translations aimed at literary reading and cultural dissemination is foreignization with literal translation combined with annotation.

Huang (2022), in analyzing Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak’s English translation of the script *Treasure in the Chest*, noted that while the immediate purpose of the translation was for stage

performance, the translation was revised and was later published after the performance concluded. In conducting such translations of original works, specific strategies are employed, such as script annotations, which include adding explanations and introductions for different characters in the play.

An and Zhang (2023) argued that when translating Xiqu scripts, translators from different cultural backgrounds integrate their cultural characteristics into their work. To illustrate this, they analyzed translations by three translators: Xu Yuanchong, Hsiung Shih-I, and Henry H. Hart. Their findings reveal distinct translation strategies among the three: Xu Yuanchong predominantly employed literal translation supplemented by free translation, carefully selecting words preserve the rhythmic and phonological aesthetics of the original; Hsiung Shih-I prioritized fidelity to the meaning of the original text over rhyme, focusing on fluency and often using additions for clarity; Henry H. Hart emphasized appropriate domestication, ensuring the translation's smoothness and coherence. For example, An and Zhang examined the translation of the sentence 你是个银样镗枪头 *ni shi ge yin yang la qiang tou* (literally means “you are a silvery pewter spearhead”). Xu Yuanchong translated it as “You look like a silver spearhead. But in fact, it is made of lead”, combining literal and free translation while maintaining rhyme. Hsiung Shih-I rendered it as “And as a spear-head that looks like silver but is really wax”. Henry H. Hart translated it as “Indeed you are but a waxen candle” (An and Zhang 2023: 183).

2.2.3.2. The form of stage subtitles

For the translation to be shown to the audience in the stage performance, Chang and Zhang (2020) referred to the word *subtitles* in their analysis. However, it is often named *surtitles*¹³ when it is used in theater settings where the performers are on stage while the text is displayed on a screen positioned separately from the visual performance. Surtitles are designed for theater audiences, allowing for optimal viewing during live performances. The authors analyzed the translation of culturally loaded words and expressions in Xiqu surtitles and suggested that free translation is an effective solution (though they did not explicitly define it as such). For instance, in *The Peony Pavilion*, the term 毛诗 *mao shi* (Maoheng school's poetry) was translated as

¹³ <https://www.captitles.com/library/what-is-the-difference-between-subtitles-and-surtitles>

“The Book of Song”, reflecting an adaptation aimed at audience comprehension. Additionally, they noted that domestication is the most commonly employed strategy in stage surtitle translation. This solution minimizes the challenges posed by linguistic and cultural differences, ensuring smoother audience understanding. For example, the term 春光 *chun guang* (literally means spring sunshine, but used as a metaphor for parental nurturing in Chinese) was translated as “the nurture of parental sunshine”, providing a culturally accessible interpretation for the target audience.

Zhang (2014) highlighted that incorporating English surtitles into Xiqu stage performances not only preserves traditional Chinese culture but also enables foreign audiences to experience the authentic essence of Chinese Xiqu. Zhang mentioned that surtitle translation needs to follow the principle of simplicity firstly, focusing on short sentences and using simple. References should be explicit to make the semantics clear. Secondly, it should follow the principle of content priority, convey the more profound meaning, and, in cases where it is impossible to annotate due to word limitations, it should flexibly adopt literal translation, free translation, and reduction to focus on translating the meaning of the content. Finally, the translation should adhere to the principle of musicality, aiming to preserve the rhythmic and acoustic features characteristic of Xiqu. Zhang sought to balance clarity and cultural richness, enhancing accessibility for international audiences while maintaining the artistic integrity of Xiqu.

It is my view that the translation solutions for stage surtitles and TV and film subtitles do not differ significantly. In the following section, I will elaborate on this in detail.

2.2.3.3. The form of TV and film subtitles

Chang and Zhang (2020) distinguished between stage surtitles in theaters and subtitles for TV and film, acknowledging that while both are forms of translation synchronized with the performance, there are some differences. They argued that viewers have control over playback in TV and film, allowing more time and space to read subtitles. However, they did not specify particular translation solutions but mention that cultural information, such as historical context and character introductions, can be included in separate scrolling forms or displayed on the side of the screen.

An alternative solution may be considered for live theater performances: programs or booklets can be distributed in advance to provide audience members with information about the main characters, their relationships, and the story background, thereby offering a degree of cultural orientation prior to the performance. The large screen showing surtitles during the performance can provide additional explanations for specific references or cultural allusions, but the audience focuses mainly on the live stage performance. While TV and film subtitles allow for more control over playback, continuous pauses to read subtitles can interrupt the rhythm and affect the experience of Chinese Xiqu. Therefore, I argue that the translation strategies for stage surtitles and TV and film subtitles are not significantly different. Below, I will review the translation solutions for this kind of translation.

Feng (2010) analyzed the translation of culturally loaded words and expressions in the English subtitles of the film *Mei Lanfang* using the five strategies proposed by Li Yunxing (2001) for translating cultural terms in film. The conclusion is that when translating Chinese Xiqu, the following considerations should be followed. First, subtitle translation must adhere to the time and spatial constraints of the subtitle. Since subtitles are limited by the available reading time and screen space, the translation should be concise and easy to understand. Second, addressing the cultural gaps between Chinese and English is important. For cultural terms that do not significantly affect the meaning, omission may be used to eliminate irrelevant terms. When a direct equivalent is unavailable in English, a literal translation or phonetic transcription may be used. For instance, the term *dan* (female role in Jingju) may be translated as “dan actress”. Alternatively, explicitation can be employed to provide additional context, such as translating 贴片子 *tie pian zi* (a Xiqu makeup behavior), as “paste locks of hair over their cheeks” to offer background information. Lastly, the translation should balance both the literary and performative qualities of Chinese Xiqu. This includes maintaining rhyme, rhythm, and aesthetic beauty in the translation to preserve the original artistic qualities of the work.

Subtitle translation is an important aspect of Xiqu translation, which is why a detailed chapter on this topic is included in the dissertation’s case study (see chapter six, subtitle translation).

2.2.3.4. Form of stage performance

It is worth mentioning that some researchers have focused on translations intended for performance, specifically, how the translation should be presented when performed in English on stage. However, such translations are currently filled with controversy. Cao (2011) pointed out that foreign sinologists generally tend to favor domestication and free translation for performance-oriented translations. However, he argued that there are limitations to Xiqu translations for performance. Firstly, even when Xiqu is performed abroad, the audience mainly consists of Chinese expatriates, so there is no need to perform in a foreign language. Secondly, Western theatrical troupes are not trained in professional Xiqu vocal techniques, making the performance of Xiqu unrealistic. Therefore, Cao believed that the domestication approach often causes Xiqu to lose its authenticity, and we should not spend excessive time and effort on Xiqu translations from a performance perspective. As Bassnett (1985) stated, the “performability” of theatrical translation is vexing and lacks definition.

However, some scholars hold a different view. For example, as Huang (2022) wrote in one of his interviews with Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, a renowned sinologist and professor from the University of Hawaii, who has been involved in Jingju performance, teaching, and translation for over 40 years, has worked on translating Jingju into English translations suitable for performance, in Wichmann’s translations of Jingju lyrics, which are primarily monosyllabic Chinese characters with many ending in vowels, she breaks down multi-syllable English words to fit the structure of Chinese syllables. For example, she would break down words like “explain” to maintain a similar syllabic structure as “e-xlain” and prefers English words ending in vowels to facilitate singing. In addition, Huang (2022) also proposed the following strategies for stage performances: adding annotations to the performance, where the actors explain character names during the performance. In the interview, Wichmann noted that character names carry rich cultural connotations and should be accurately conveyed; literal translation, for example, *跳进黄河也洗不清* *tiao jin huang he ye xi bu qing* (literally means “even jumping into the Yellow River will not cleanse it”) preserved both the original meaning and the imagery, while also adding the culturally and geographically significant term “Yellow River”, which plays a beneficial role in cultural communication; another strategy is flexible translation, where the

speaker's language style is adjusted based on the character's personality, such as transforming a rhetorical question into a declarative sentence.

Moreover, several scholars who study the performability of Chinese Xiqu have interviewed Wichmann, such as Feng and Chang (2019), indicating that Wichmann's strategy for translating Xiqu for performance is widely recognized. I have also read Wichmann's article, where she mentioned that to translate Chinese Xiqu into a form suitable for performance and singing, each Chinese character must be translated into a single English syllable, and each phrase must form a complete unit of meaning and grammar. Certain sentences require the correct pronunciation with specific vowels (such as the long-drawn-out note in Xiqu singing), so it is best to retain the vowels in the same position in the English translation. The aesthetic pattern of final rhymes in the original Xiqu must also be reproduced in the English translation, using vowels that suit the character being portrayed, such as using the "ee" sound for the *dan* role (Wichmann 1994).

As it is shown above, performance translations of Xiqu have primarily focused on the singability of the lyrics. In this dissertation, the focus is placed on the linguistic and cultural challenges involved in translating Xiqu texts, rather than on issues of performability; therefore, aspects such as singability and stage performance will not be examined in detail.

Chapter Three: Case Study--Translation of Modal Particle 啊 (A) in Xiqu

3.1. Introduction

A general translation problem can be detected between English and Chinese concerning the so-called Modal Particles (MPs). This problem is because Chinese has a vibrant system of MPs; English, on the contrary, is regarded by most linguists as a language without a separate group of MPs. The usage of MPs often reflects underlying social relationships, politeness norms, and emotional situations that are deeply embedded in Chinese culture. Therefore, the English translation of Chinese MPs is a general problem for translation. In this chapter, I will attempt to find various solutions to this structural problem, which occurs during translation. After a general overview of the literature on Chinese MPs, especially regarding the English translation of Chinese MPs, I will demonstrate the translation solutions available for the MP 啊 (a). 啊 (a) is one of the most frequently used MPs in spoken Chinese, and therefore it can be taken as a prominent representative of MPs in general.

3.2. Literature review

3.2.1. Chinese MPs in general

The Chinese expression for MPs is “yuqi ci”, which means ‘mood words’ (Song 1998: 388). Using MPs is one of the most important means to express tone in Chinese; therefore, they play a vital role in Chinese, especially in the spoken language. There are six typical MPs in Chinese, namely 的 (de), 了 (le), 呢 (ne), 吗 (ma), 吧 (ba), and 啊 (a). MPs can only be attached to sentences or other words to play a particular grammatical role. They often work together with intonation to express tone so that some MPs can express a variety of tones (Huang and Liao 2002: 45). The following examples can have different meanings in the spoken languages or different contexts with different tones. Therefore, I have not given the explanation for the meanings here.

Examples:

(1)

Source text	这	本	书	是	我	的	。
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Chinese Pinyin	zhe	ben	shu	shi	wo	DE	
Glosses	this	CL	book	is	1sg	Ø	
English translation	This book is mine Ø. ¹⁴						

(2)

Source text	她	回	家	了	。		
Chinese Pinyin	ta	hui	jia	LE			
Glosses	3sg	back	home	Ø			
English translation	She went home Ø.						

(3)

Source text	我	的	手	机	在	哪	呢	？
Chinese Pinyin	wo	de	shou	ji	zai	na	NE	
Glosses	1sg	P	mobile phone	Pre	where	Ø		
English translation	Where is my mobile phone Ø?							

(4)

Source text	她	是	你	姐	姐	吗	？
Chinese Pinyin	ta	shi	ni	jie	jie	MA	
Glosses	3sg	is	you	sister	Ø		
English translation	Is she your sister Ø?						

(5)

Source text	快	点	走	吧	！		
Chinese Pinyin	kuai	dian	zou	BA			
Glosses	quickly		go	Ø			
English translation	Hurry up Ø!						

(6)

Source text	到	底	猜	着	了	没	有	啊	？
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

¹⁴ These examples that I present in the literature review are very popular frequently used constructions in spoken Chinese; as they exist in our daily life, I am not able to give a specific source for them.

Chinese Pinyin	dao	di	cai	zhao	le	mei	you	A	
Glosses	finally		guess		le-ASP	not		Ø	
English translation	Have I finally got the right answer Ø?								

3.2.1.1. Classification of MPs

MPs can be subdivided into in-sentence MPs and sentence-final MPs. In pragmatic terms, in-sentence MPs are mainly used to make pauses, while sentence-final MPs are commonly used to express tone (Shen 2016: 139; Huang and Liao 2002: 45). MPs can also be classified according to syllables and can be divided into monosyllabic intonation words: 啊 (a), 吧 (ba), 呢 (ne), 吗 (ma), 了 (le), etc., and multisyllabic intonation words: 罢了 (ba le), 而已 (er yi), 来着 (lai zhe), 的话 (de hua), etc. Some researchers have also classified MPs into typical MPs such as 的 (de), 了 (le), 呢 (ne), 吗 (ma), 吧 (ba), 啊 (a), and other atypical MPs. The so-called typical MPs are those MPs with a high frequency of use, expressing a stronger tone of the speaker, while the so-called atypical MPs are those MPs with a low frequency of use, expressing a weaker tone (Qi 2002: 141).

For example, a typical MP is 啊 (a):

(7)

Source text	她	是	我	姐	姐	啊	。
Chinese Pinyin	ta	shi	wo	jie	jie	A	
Glosses	3sg	is	my	sister		Ø	
English translation	She is my sister Ø.						

And an atypical MP is 罢了 (bale):

(8)

Source text	他	不	过	是	想	帮	你	罢	了	。
Chinese Pinyin	ta	bu	guo	shi	xiang	bang	ni	BA	LE	
Glosses	3sg	just		want	help	2sg	Ø			
English translation	He's just trying to help you Ø.									

Huang and Liao (Huang and Liao 2002: 45) classified MPs into the following four categories according to the tone they can express: exclamative MPs, interrogative MPs, imperative MPs, and declarative MPs.

MP(s) which can express exclamative tone: 啊 (a)

(9)

Source text	天	气	真	好	啊	!
Chinese Pinyin	tian	qi	zhen	hao	A	
Glosses	weather		really	good	Ø	
English translation	What a nice weather Ø!					

MPs which can express interrogative tone: 吗/么 (ma/me), 呢 (ne), 吧 (ba), 啊 (a)

(10)

Source text	你	去	过	北	京	吗	?
Chinese Pinyin	ni	qu	guo	bei	jing	MA	
Glosses	2sg	go	guo-ASP	Beijing		Ø	
English translation	Have you ever been to Beijing Ø?						

MPs which can express imperative tone: 吧 (ba), 了 (le), 啊 (a)

(11)

Source text	别	笑	了	。
Chinese Pinyin	bie	xiao	LE	
Glosses	don't	laugh	Ø	
English translation	Stop laughing Ø.			

MPs which can express declarative tone: 的 (de), 了 (le), 吧 (ba), 呢 (ne), 啊 (a), 着(zhe), 嘛 (ma), 呗 (bei), 罢了/而已 (ba le/er yi), 也罢 (ye ba), 也好 (ye hao), 啦 (la), 嘞 (lei), 喽 (lou), 着呢 (zhe ne)

(12)

Source text	我	告	诉	你	啊	。
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---

Chinese Pinyin	wo	gao	su	ni	A	
Glosses	1sg	tell		2sg	Ø	
English translation	Let me tell you something Ø.					

Among these classifications of MPs, I will choose Huang and Liao (2002)'s to carry out my analyses in this study to facilitate the analysis of the functions of MPs. Both English and Chinese sentences can be classified into four sentence types, namely declarative sentences, exclamative sentences, interrogative sentences, and imperative sentences. Huang and Liao's classification is mainly based on these traditional grammatical terms and can serve as a solid basis for shedding light on the translation solutions adopted. After this short general overview, I will demonstrate the translation problems of MPs by investigating 啊 (a), which can express all four kinds of tone mentioned above. In the following sections, I will systematically present all the derived forms of 啊 (a)¹⁵ that appear in my corpus of Chinese Xiqu.

3.2.1.2. Functions of MPs 啊 (a)

啊 (a) is one of the most commonly used MPs; it can be used in or at the end of declarative, interrogative, exclamative, and imperative sentences, and is usually used at the end.

As a Sentence Final MP, 啊 (a) mainly has the following functions.

3.2.1.2.1. Some of the main functions of 啊 (a)

It functions as a kind of MP that can express the emotions of speakers, where the specific feelings depend on the content of the utterance and the context environment (Hu 1987: 86). For example,

(13)

Source text	她	是	你	姐	姐	啊	!
Chinese Pinyin	ta	shi	ni	jie	jie	A	
Glosses	3sg	is	2sg	sister		Ø	

¹⁵ Many derivations can be found in the common typical MPs, usually based on phonetic changes, but also resulting from different writing habits (Qi Huyang, 2002:141). Here I take 啊 (a) as an example. According to Qi, 啊 (a) can be derived in the following form: 啊 (a)-- 呵 (he), 呀 (ya), 哇 (wa), 哈 (ha), 哟 (you), 唉 (ai), 哪 (na), 咄 (duo), 哦 (o), 噢 (o), 呕 (ou), 那 (na), 阿 (a), 哑 (ya)...

English translation	She is your sister Ø!
---------------------	-----------------------

Scene 1: A little boy is shouting at a girl. His mother, angry with the little boy, tells him the girl is his sister and asks him not to do that. In this scene, the specific emotion of 啊 (a) is anger.

Scene 2: A boy falls in love with a girl, and he is surprised to find that the girl is his best friend's sister. In this scene, the specific emotion of 啊 (a) is surprise.

It can express the attitude and feelings of the speaker, and it expresses reminders and warnings in declarative and imperative sentences (Zhu 1982: 207-238). For example, in imperative sentences,

(14)

Source text	多	喝	水	啊	。
Chinese Pinyin	duo	he	shui	A	
Glosses	more	drink	water	Ø	
English translation	Drink more water Ø.				

In this example, 啊 (a) indicates the speaker is reminding the listener.

Moreover, it can also help to express the special tone of the speaker (Hu 1995: 376). For example,

(15)

Source text	这	垃	圾	不	是	你	扔	的	啊	？
Chinese Pinyin	zhe	la	ji	bu	shi	ni	reng	de	A	
Glosses	this	trash		not	be	2sg	throw		Ø	
English translation	You didn't throw this garbage away Ø?									

Here 啊 (a) expresses a sceptical tone of the speaker.

For the MP 啊 (a), Huang and Liao (2002: 46) suggested that it is not only capable of adding tone, but also of relaxing the tone and adding emotion, and narrowing the distance between the speaker and the listener. For example,

(16)

Source text	我	管	不	了	哇	。
Chinese Pinyin	wo	guan	bu	liao	A (WA)	
Glosses	1sg	manage	can't		Ø	
English translation	I can't manage it Ø.					

Since 哇 (wa) is a derivative of 啊 (a), it can be treated as equivalent to 啊 (a) in the present analysis. If the MP 啊 (a) was not used at the end, the tone would be too blunt; without 啊 (a), it seems that the speaker is angry with the listener, but with 啊 (a), the tone of the speaker is more moderate, and the distance between them is also narrowed.

Shao (2012: 601) argued that the role of the MP 啊 (a) in genuine questions of interrogative sentences is not only to “relax the tone”, but also to assume a dual function of “surprise” and “ask for answers”. He gave an example,

(17)

Source text	你	是	李	部	长	啊	？
Chinese Pinyin	ni	shi	li	bu	zhang	A	
Glosses	2sg	is	Li (surname)	minister		Ø	
English translation	Are you Minister Li Ø?						

He explained that due to the use of 啊 (a), the level of suspicion is reduced, and the tone appears gentle, but it adds an element of surprise. The sentence is equivalent to “You are Minister Lee, huh? I cannot believe I did not think of that.” Moreover, the speaker also expects the listener to answer.

3.2.1.2.2. Further research on the functions of 啊 (a)

Some scholars have also systematically classified the functions of the MP 啊 (a). For example, Zhao (1968: 803-806) systematically listed ten meanings and functions of 啊 (a): 1. To begin a question; 2. To ask for confirmation; 3. To call out and tell; 4. To command; 5. To exclaim; 6. To state impatiently; 7. To remind; 8. To warn; 9. As a pause to give the listener time; 10. To enumerate.

Lv (1980: 42-43) divided the functions of 啊 (a) into six categories: 1. used at the end of a declarative sentence as an explanation or reminder; 2. used at the end of an imperative sentence to express a requesting, urging, commanding or warning tone, etc.; 3. used at the end of an exclamative sentence, strengthening the exclamatory tone; 4. used at the end of an interrogative sentence, to express the requiring tone; 5. used in the sentence to show a pause in speech; 6. used to indicate a long process after a repeated verb.

Zhang (2005) also analyzed the functions of the MP 啊 (a) in four different sentence types from the perspective of verbal communication: in declarative sentences, it is used to emphasize and identify important information, to remind, to affirm, and to express exclamation, and it helps the listener to grasp and understand the important information that the speaker wants to convey accurately and efficiently. In interrogative sentences, the basic function is to “affirm”, to direct the listener’s attention to a fact, to remind, or to urge. In imperative sentences, it is used to urge, to remind, to dissuade (i.e., forbid + remind, to soften the tone). In exclamatory sentences, its function is to express emotion, to emphasize, to affirm, or to exclaim.

Zhou (2018) concluded that in declarative sentences, 啊 (a) can be understood as counter-expectation, while sometimes it can convey information and soften the tone. In imperative sentences, 啊 (a) is used to command and to show the speaker’s surprise. In interrogative sentences, 啊 (a) expresses a counter-expectation on the part of the speaker and softens the tone, conveys an intense inquisitive mood, indicates surprise on the part of the speaker, and strengthens the tone when seeking confirmation. In exclamative sentences, 啊 (a) shows a strong emotion of surprise and tries to attract attention.

As we can see, 啊 (a) has a vibrant system of expressing tone, and there is a vast literature on its function. However, there is very little research that focuses on the translational problems of 啊 (a). After reviewing the research that has been done on this topic, in the next section, I will analyse and extend the proposals on how to handle the translation of 啊 (a) into English.

3.2.2. Translation problems of MPs

Chinese has MPs, while in English, there is no such separate group of MPs, which creates problems for translators in general. In particular, due to the functions of these MPs in Chinese,

significant problems emerge during the English translation of cultural texts, because one-to-one matches cannot be found in English, although the functions of MPs should be present in the translation.

There are only a few studies on how to translate MPs. Yang (2000) discussed how to translate MPs from ancient Chinese into English, and analyzed various solutions that could be adopted. For example, 夫 (fu) does not need to be translated when it is located at the beginning of the sentence. Whereas, for instance, 其 (qi) can be translated as “can” or “perhaps”.

Xu (2006) tried to use the strategies of domestication to analyse the English translation of Chinese MPs. She proposed two solutions to adopt when translating MPs; firstly, omission, which means ignoring the MP in translation, for example, “一起走喽!”, “喽” (lou) is an MP in this sentence; if “lou” is omitted, the tone and meaning will not be changed, so it does not need to be translated, so the translation can be “Let’s go!”; secondly, expressing the tone of MPs by using tense, sentence patterns or by adding words.

Both Tang and Li (2007) and Shen (2016) took the drama *Thunderstorm* as a corpus, and explored the English translations of the expressions 吧 (ba), 呢 (ne), 啊 (a), 呀 (ya) and 啦 (la), and the English translation methods used for 呢 (ne) and 吗 (ma). Tang and Li argued that in addition to being translated into various tones, most of these MPs in Chinese are also represented by modals, which illustrates the close relationship between the tone system and the modal system in the Chinese language system. Shen (2016) suggested that when translating MPs into English, it is necessary to consider the actual pragmatic function of the sentence according to the context and character relationships, and then choose to use different English translation solutions, such as using intonational adverbs, exclamations, using addition and adaptation according to the context of the dialog, and using different sentence patterns to match intonation, etc.

Liang (2011) and Luo (2016) studied the solutions used for the English translation of sentence-final MPs in the discourse of Lin Daiyu and Wang Xifeng in *The Dream of the Red Chamber (Hong Lou Meng)*. They concluded that in the process of translating characters’ discourse, it is important for translators to consider power and equivalence relationships.

Wang (2015) and Yang (2019) used two kinds of English translation versions of the drama *Teahouse* to contrast the English translation solutions used for the modern Chinese sentence-final MPs 吗 (ma), 呢 (ne), 吧 (ba), and 啊 (a). Yang proposed various solutions to translate the MP 啊 (a), which included the following: maintaining consistency of form/tone type; using modal words or adverbs in English, or adding exclamations; using fixed phrases or sentence patterns in English; changing sentence patterns; tone compensation.

Ko and Xu (2022) found that omission, explicitation, and linguistic amplification are the three solutions (they use the term “strategy”) used for translating MPs. They selected three Chinese films as a corpus to analyse the applicability of these solutions. In this chapter, I will use these three solutions to test whether they are also appropriate for translating MPs in a Chinese Xiqu text.

As has been demonstrated, although there are some precedents for the study of these Chinese MPs, there is still very little research on the translation of the MP 啊 (a), which is indeed one of the most commonly used MPs. At the same time, there is also very little research that focuses on the translation problems of Chinese Xiqu generally, and more particularly, the translation of Chinese MPs in opera texts. Chinese Xiqu texts include many dialogs performed on stage; they are, therefore, in some sense oral dialogs, and include many MPs. To improve the translation of Xiqu texts, it is worth researching how to translate MPs in cultural (Xiqu) texts.

3.3. Corpus and methodology

In my research, Chinese Xiqu text *Silang Visits His Mother* is chosen as the corpus. I chose Chinese Xiqu text as my corpus because there is almost no research on the translation of MPs in Chinese Xiqu, and because Chinese Xiqu is a rich corpus including plenty of MPs. In Chinese Xiqu texts, there are many dialogues, and the most frequent use of MPs is generally in dialogues. These dialogs in Chinese Xiqu express many emotions and attitudes that can be indicated by MPs. What is more, there is a vast number of corpora of already translated texts; *Silang Visits His Mother* is one of them, so it is an independent source text which can be analyzed directly.

This chapter uses the comparative analysis method. By this method, it analyses whether the presence or absence of the MP 啊 (a) affects the tone of the sentences, explores whether the

meaning or function of the MP 啊 (a) is presented in the translation, and compares the difference in tone between the English translation and the original text of the corpus, to offer reasonable translation solutions. This research will analyse the translation of the MP 啊 (a) from two perspectives; firstly, to examine whether the form and tone of the translated texts which include the MP 啊 (a) are consistent with the original texts, and secondly, to examine whether the function of the MP 啊 (a) is reflected in the translated texts.

As mentioned in the previous section, Ko and Xu (2022) analyzed the functions of the MP 啊 (a) by categorizing them based on different sentence types and examining how this particle should be represented in translation through case studies. My theoretical framework for translating modal particles builds upon their findings.

The authors argued that in declarative sentences, the MP 啊 (a) can be regarded as a tone-intensifier. In their textual analysis, omission is identified as the most commonly used solution; however, omission sometimes diminishes the speaker's tone, failing to replicate the function of 啊 (a) in the source text. Therefore, linguistic amplification and explicitation are also frequently employed in the translation of declarative sentences. In interrogative sentences, 啊 (a) serves as an indicator of surprise or uncertainty in declarative-form questions. When translating such modal particles, omission is deemed an appropriate solution, though linguistic amplification and explicitation may also be applied depending on the context. When 啊 (a) functions as an intensifier in genuine questions, omission remains the most frequently used solution, while explicitation is less common. Conversely, in rhetorical questions, linguistic amplification and explicitation are more suitable, with omission being less appropriate. For imperative and exclamatory sentences, omission is often employed since the English translations typically convey the tone without the need for additional markers.

Drawing on the preceding discussion, the information is organized in Table 2. The "Solutions" column in the table outlines the solutions deemed by Ko and Xu (2022) as the most suitable and commonly used for different sentence types. However, they also noted that other solutions may be employed when contextually appropriate. For instance, while omission is the most frequently used solution to indicate the speaker's surprise or uncertainty in declarative-form questions, linguistic amplification and explicitation can be utilized if deemed more

appropriate. Ultimately, the choice of solution depends on the context and specific circumstances of the text.

Sentence type	Modality function of 啊 (a)	Specific sentence types	Solutions
Declarative	To intensify speaker's emotive tone implied in the statement	• declarative sentences with emphatic words	• omission
		• declarative sentence without emphatic words	• linguistic amplification • explicitation
Interrogative	To indicate speaker's surprise or uncertainty in declarative-form questions.	• declarative-form questions	• omission
	To intensify speaker's inquisitive mood in seeking confirmation in other types of genuine questions.	• genuine questions (inquisitive mood)	• omission
	To intensify speaker's surprise at or rejection of the proposition in rhetorical (non-genuine) questions.	• rhetorical questions	• linguistic amplification • explicitation
Exclamative	To intensify speaker's politeness and heartiness when used in social expressions such as greetings, farewells,	• social expressions	• omission

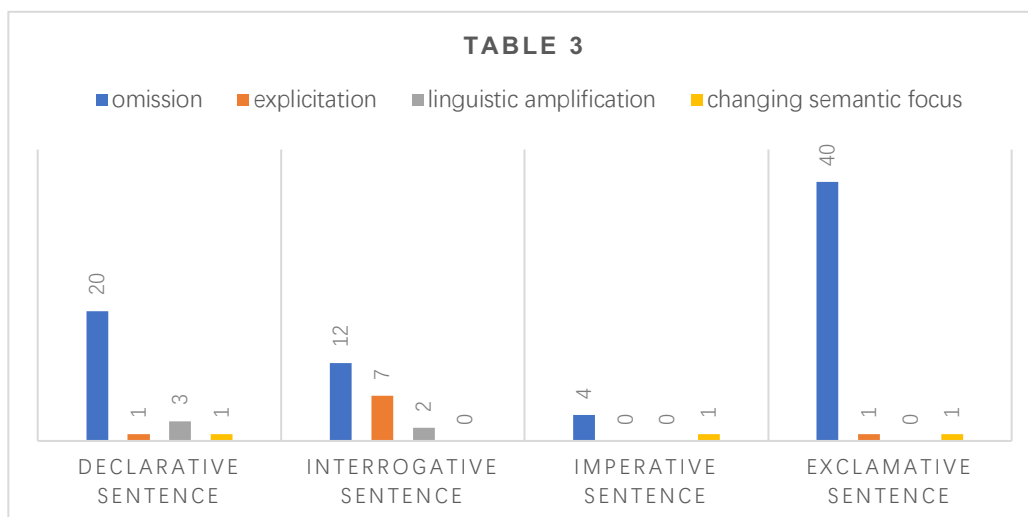
	apologies, gratitude and assertions.		
	To intensify speaker's exclamative tone in other exclamative sentences.	• exclamative sentence	• omission
Imperative	To intensify speaker's imperative tone in expecting something to be or not be done.	• imperative sentences	• omission

Table 2. Modality functions of 啊 (a) in different sentence types (Ko and Xu 2022)

3.4. Data analysis and discussion of translation solutions

The Xiqu *Silang Visits His Mother* includes a significant number of MPs. In the Xiqu source text, a total of 93 sentences using the MP 啊 (a) were found. The examples were divided into four groups, namely declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, imperative sentences, and exclamative sentences. Among the 93 sentences with the MP 啊 (a), there are 25 declarative sentences, 21 interrogative sentences, 5 imperative sentences, and 42 exclamative sentences, which account for 27%, 23%, 5%, and 45% of the occurrences, respectively. As for the solutions which the translator used, (here, we focus primarily on Translation 1 for the analysis of translation solutions, as it is currently considered the official translation. Scott's Translation 2 will be used as supplementary material in specific examples for a comparative analysis) in the declarative sentences, 20 examples were translated with omission, 3 with linguistic amplification, 1 with explicitation, and 1 with changing semantic focus¹⁶. In the interrogative sentences, 12 examples were translated with omission, 7 with explicitation, and 2 with linguistic amplification. In the imperative sentences, there are 4 sentences translated with omission and 1 with changing semantic focus, while all the exclamative sentences, except for 1 example of explicitation and 1 example of changing semantic focus, used omission. (See Table 3 for details)

¹⁶ For this terminology, I am referring to Pym (2016a) for the translation solution type.



As we can see, omission is the most commonly used solution in translating Chinese Xiqu texts with the MP 啊 (a), especially in exclamative sentences. However, it is worth analysing and exploring how effective the translations are, whether equivalence is achieved and whether the tone of the original text is translated.

Below, I will conduct case analyses. In each example, I provide the contextual background before the detailed analysis to help readers better understand the application of the relevant translation solutions. Additionally, I have systematically collected all data related to the MP 啊 (a) extracted from the Xiqu *Silang Visits His Mother* in the appendix.

3.4.1. Declarative sentences

3.4.1.1. Omission

(18)

Source text	我	给	您	出	个	主	意	啊	。
Chinese Pinyin	wo	gei	nin	chu	ge	zhu	yi	A	
Glosses	1sg	give	2sg	present	CL	idea		Ø	
Literal meaning	I will give you an idea Ø.								
English translation 1	I have an idea for you.								
English translation 2	-								
My solution	I have an idea for you, listen. / Ah! I have an idea for you.								

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Princess Tiejing: You two please help me to think of something!

The eldest Royal Uncle: Fine, fine. I have an idea for you.

In this example, the speaker uses 啊 (a) to emphasize that the eldest Royal Uncle will give the listener an idea, and wishes to attract the listener's attention. The function of 啊 (a) here is to remind, or to call for attention. Translation 1 does not fit the function of the original; it conveys the meaning of the source text, but it does not express the emotion and tone of the speaker. Translation 2 just omits this sentence. I think it is better to add the word *listen* at the end, to express the meaning of 啊 (a), i.e., to emphasize that the following words will be important, and thus to catch the listener's attention. *Ah/Oh* can also be added at the beginning to realize the function of catching attention. Therefore, linguistic amplification would be the better solution here.

3.4.1.2. Linguistic amplification

(19)

Source text	是	得	拦	着	点	啊	。
Chinese Pinyin	shi	dei	lan	zhe	dian	A	
Glosses	be	must	stop		a bit	Ø	
Literal meaning	We will stop you Ø.						
English translation 1	We will certainly help you.						
English translation 2	Good. You try it then.						

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Princess Tiejing: Don't talk nonsense. Now, you two have to help me out.

The Eldest Royal Uncle and The Second Royal Uncle: We will certainly help you.

This example is about the situation where the Princess pretends to kill herself and wants the two Royal Uncles (her two uncles) to cooperate and stop her; it is at this point that the two Royal Uncles utter this sentence. The meaning of this sentence is "we will stop you", and the speakers use 啊 (a) to emphatically express their strong agreement with the Princess. Moreover, on a cultural level, this 啊 (a) carries an emotional nuance that conveys empathy.

Linguistic amplification involves adding certain linguistic elements such as adverbs, clausal phrases, interjections, and so on. Here, the linguistic amplification is used in Translation 1 by adding the adverb *certainly* to create an emphasis. The translation with this solution conveys the tone of agreement of the speaker very well and also expresses the cultural connotation of empathy, indicating their identification and approval. If the context is not enriched, and the sentence is only translated as “We will help you”, it will lose the attitudinal aspect, and readers or audiences will not realize the emotion of the speaker. In Translation 2, the translator adopts a free translation, completely disregarding the literal meaning of the original sentence and instead crafting a sentence based on the contextual meaning. While this solution ensures fluency in the translation, it leans toward a kind of rewriting.

3.4.1.3. Changing semantic focus

(20)

Source text	一	言	难	尽	呐	。
Chinese Pinyin	yi	yan	nan	jin	A (NA)	
Glosses	one	word	difficult	finish	Ø	
Literal meaning	I can't express my experience in few words Ø.					
English translation 1	It is a long story.					
English translation 2	It is difficult to say a word.					

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Yang Yanzhao: We should thank Heaven and Earth. Please...Fourth Brother, you were stuck in the north for fifteen years. How did you manage to escape?

Yang Yanhui: Alas! It is a long story.

In this example, the translator turns the negative sentence (source text) into a positive one (target text) by changing semantic focus. The function of the MP 啊 (a) in the original text is to soften the tone and convey the helpless tone of the speaker, similar to a sigh. The pragmatic meaning of the source text is that the experience of the speaker is too long a story to tell; therefore, it is appropriate to use changing semantic focus here, as shown in Translation 1, because the tone

remains as mild as in the source text and is not too blunt. This solution reflects a similar effect of exclamation and emotional subtlety. If the omission solution is used here to present the translation as Translation 2 does, this will also be an acceptable result, but not as good as the first version, because it would need to be compensated by intonation when speaking, otherwise it may lose the attitude of helplessness. With the solution of changing semantic focus, the translation is more linguistically appropriate and as concise as the source text.

3.4.2. Interrogative sentences

3.4.2.1. Declarative questions

3.4.2.1.1. Omission

(21)

Source text	当	初	盗	令	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	dang	chu	dao	ling	A	
Glosses	initially		steal	command	Ø	
Literal meaning	(You are talking about) stealing the arrow of command Ø?					
English translation 1	stealing the arrow of command?					
English translation 2	whom did I use?					

The context of this sentence is as follows:

The eldest Royal Uncle: Fine, fine. I have an idea for you. Let me ask you first. How did you come up with the idea for stealing the arrow of command?

Princess Tiejing: Stealing the arrow of command?

This example is an interrogative sentence in declarative form. 啊 (a) gives a rhetorical tone. The omission can be used to place the “declarative sentence form + interrogative tone” for literal translation, because the declarative sentence with the questioning tone already expresses a strong tone. In other words, although the MP is omitted in the translation, the tone of the sentences is complemented. There is also another solution which could be used to translate this sentence, i.e., linguistic amplification, which can make the tone more straightforward: “You are talking about stealing the arrow of command, aren’t you?” or “You mean stealing the arrow of

command, right?”. Postposing “aren’t you?” emphasizes the attitude of waiting for the hearer’s answer. Again, in Translation 2, the translator provides a sentence that bridges the context rather than translating the source text. This demonstrates that Scott’s solution to Xiqu translation prioritizes the target language audience’s understanding. As a result, some sentences are entirely rewritten in his version.

3.4.2.2. Genuine questions

3.4.2.2.1. Omission

(22)

Source text	你	倒	是	杨	什	么	呀	?
Chinese Pinyin	ni	dao	shi	yang	shen	me	A (YA)	
Glosses	2sg	finally	be	Yang (surname)	what		Ø	
Literal meaning	What’s your name? Yang what Ø?							
English translation 1	Yang who?							
English translation 2	Which of the Yang brothers are you?							
My solution	Yang who? Please let me know!							

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Yang Yanhui: Alas! My Princess! My virtuous Princess, please listen while I tell you my family background: ...In fact, I am Yang...

Princess Tiejing: Yang who?

In this example, the speaker is eager to know the answer, so she emphasizes her eager tone with 啊 (a) in the source text. What’s more, this sentence is what the Princess says to her husband; in ancient China, the status of women was inferior to that of their husbands, and the MP 啊 (a) here also makes the tone of the Princess more moderate. Translation 1 gives a very short translation, which does not convey the mild tone of 啊 (a). In Translation 2, the translator, understanding from the context that the Yang family consists of several brothers, renders the line as “Which of the Yang brothers are you?”. While this aligns with the contextual meaning, it omits the modal particle’s functions of urging and softening the tone. Therefore, if the

linguistic amplification was used, by adding “please let me know!” at the end, the eager and mild tone could be conveyed more effectively. Here, the reason I use “let me know” but not “tell me” is that an imperative sentence beginning with “let” generally expresses a suggestion. It will be gentler and more polite than an imperative sentence beginning with “do”.

3.4.2.2.2. Explicitation

(23)

Source text	您	耍	的	哪	门	子	巧	腔	啊	？
Chinese Pinyin	nin	shua	de	na	men	zi	qiao	qiang	A	
Glosses	2sg	play		what			clever	tune	Ø	
Literal meaning	What tricks are you playing Ø?									
English translation 1	What are you doing here?									
English translation 2	Why are you still singing drama at a time like this?									

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Princess Tiejing: Ah! Having left Yin’an Palace I am at my wit’s end.

The eldest Royal Uncle: My Princess, what are you doing here if you are not thinking about how to save your husband?

Here is a sentence in which the eldest Royal Uncle speaks to the Princess. The speaker utters this sentence to blame the listener for doing useless things that cannot help her husband, and to urge her to do something more meaningful instead. The literal meaning of the source text is “what tricks are you playing?”, but the implicit meaning is “what are you doing here?”. Translation 1 gives a manifest meaning which is implicit in the source text. The use of 啊 (a) in the source text highlights a questioning tone with some blame, but it is not a serious accusation; instead, it carries a teasing, rhetorical sense of doubt. A wh-question is effective enough to express the meaning and tone of the source text, although a better effect can be achieved through compensation by intonation. This sentence can also be translated with linguistic amplification as “Oh come on! What are you doing here?”, which will better convey the blaming, questioning tone of the speaker.

Translation 2 is examined below. As discussed in chapter one, Xiqu incorporates both Singing and Speaking¹⁷. In this scene, the original text is designed such that Empress Dowager Xiao tells the Princess not to plead on behalf of Yang Silang anymore. The Princess responds with an exclamation, “Ah” with Speaking, followed by Singing *Having left Yin'an Palace, I am at my wit's end*. It is only after this that the Royal Uncle speaks his line. The term 耍巧腔 *shua qiao qiang*, which refers to the performance of skillful or embellished melodic lines, can be appropriately rendered as “singing drama”, a translation that captures both the musical and performative aspects of the original. Firstly, this rendering not only conveys the literal meaning of 耍巧腔 *shua qiao qiang*, but also reflects the audience’s perspective, as the Princess indeed transitions from Speaking to Singing. Secondly, this translation employs linguistic amplification by adding the word “still”, effectively conveying the modal particle’s sense of blame and urgency.

3.4.2.2.3. Linguistic amplification

(24)

Source text	怎	么	样	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	zen	me	yang	A	
Glosses	how			Ø	
Literal meaning	What will happen Ø?				
English translation 1	Then what?				
English translation 2	Well?				

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Princess Tiejing: You think I really do not know how to swear? ...If I were to divulge even a hint of what he tells me...

Yang Yanhui: Then what?

This is a genuine question in a dialogue between the couple. Silang, the Consort, is asking what will happen if the Princess breaks her oath. Although the position of Silang as a husband is

¹⁷ In the context of Xiqu, “唱 chang” and “念 nian” are specialized performance terms; accordingly, they are rendered with capitalized initials as *Singing* and *Speaking* to reflect their technical status.

superior to that of the Princess, Silang loves his wife very much, so he always speaks to the Princess with a mild tone. The function of 啊 (a) here in the original text is to emphasize the eager tone of the speaker and to soften the tone at the same time. It conveys a gentle questioning tone and emphasizes that the speaker is waiting for the answer. By adding “Then...” in Translation 1, the translator wants to express that the speaker is waiting for the answer, which makes Translation 1 functionally equivalent to the source text. If it is only translated as “What?”, the attitudinal aspect will be lost. Translation 2 employs omission, replacing the original sentence with a single word. This solution effectively conveys the modal particle’s function of emphasizing an eager tone, indicating that the speaker is awaiting an answer. Additionally, this expression aligns well with English conversational habits, and using “Then?” could achieve a similar effect. However, this solution relies on a mild tone during real speaking to supplement the intended nuance; the text itself does not fully capture the softened tone.

3.4.2.3. Rhetorical questions

3.4.2.3.1. Omission

(25)

Source text	还	要	叫	咱	家	盟	誓	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	hai	yao	jiao	zan	jia	meng	shi	A	
Glosses	still	want	let	1sg		swear		Ø	
Literal meaning	You want me to make a swear Ø?								
English translation 1	You want me swear it?								
English translation 2	What, you want me to swear?								

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Yang Yanhui: I can tell you the truth only if you swear an oath to Heaven to keep it secret between us

Princess Tiejing: What? After all of this, you want me swear it?

Yang Yanhui: Yes!

Here, the speaker uses 啊 (a) to emphasize her surprise, which culturally serves both as an emotional exclamation and as an intensifier of tone, to express that it is unbelievable that her husband wants her to swear to something. Translation 1 is a declarative-form question, which is usually used in informal conversations to express the speaker’s surprise and rhetorical tone. As Translation 1 can convey the tone of the speaker, omission is an appropriate solution here. In Translation 2, the translator uses linguistic amplification by adding the word “what”, effectively highlighting the speaker’s surprise and rhetorical tone. This solution fully conveys the function of the modal particle. Therefore, both solutions are viable in this example.

3.4.2.3.2. Explication

(26)

Source text	您	二	位	谁	跟	谁	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	nin	er	wei	shei	gen	shei	A	
Glosses	2sg	two		who	and	who	Ø	
Literal meaning	Who is with whom between you two?							
English translation 1	You are her daughter.							
English translation 2	When you were a child you could get round your mother when she was angry.							

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Princess Tiejing: Mother is still angry although she pardoned my husband. She won’t give me back the little Prince. What can I do?

The eldest Royal Uncle: You are her daughter. Just go ahead, smile and wish her good health-say something sweet!

The second Royal Uncle: That’s right!

The context for this sentence is that Princess Tiejing is afraid that Empress Dowager Xiao (the Princess’s mother) is still angry with her. To reassure the Princess, the two Royal Uncles say these words, indicating that the Princess does not need to worry. The 啊 (a) in the source text has the function of easing the tone; it reflects the two Royal Uncles’ convinced attitude towards

what they say and expresses a tone of consolation, because they know the Princess and her mother have a close relationship. The translator changes the rhetorical question (source text) to the declarative sentence (Translation 1) with an explicitation solution, revealing the intended meaning of the source text. If explicitation is not applied, a literal translation of the source text as “Who is with whom between you two?” would be felt awkward and unnatural in English, failing to convey the speaker’s comforting tone. However, in Translation 2, the translator rewrites the sentence based on contextual clues, aiming to emphasize the close relationship between the Princess and Empress Dowager Xiao. This rewritten sentence successfully conveys both the speaker’s comforting intention and the original meaning of the line.

3.4.3. Exclamative sentences

3.4.3.1. Omission

(27)

Source text 1	你	瞧	瞧	这	小	公	母	
Chinese Pinyin line 1	ni	qiao	qiao	zhe	xiao	gong	mu	
Glosses line 1	2sg	see	see	this	small	male	female	
Source text 2	俩	哭	得	多	可	怜	呐	!
Chinese Pinyin line 2	lia	ku	de	duo	ke	lian	A (NA)	
Glosses line 2	two	cry		so	pathetic		Ø	
Literal meaning	Look at this little pair, the male and female, crying so pitifully!							
English translation 1	How pathetic this couple are!							
English translation 2	Take a look. The two young people are weeping piteously.							

The context of this sentence is as follows:

The eldest Royal Uncle: How pathetic this couple are! Let’s step forward and ask Mother to forgive them.

The second Royal Uncle: Come on! We would not be very convincing!

Here, the speaker uses an MP to emphasize the exclamatory tone and expresses that he feels sad and sympathizes with the young couple. Although the translator omits the MP in Translation

1, he gives an exclamatory sentence pattern in translation. Therefore, I can also feel the exclamatory tone and the sympathy of the speaker in the English translation. Thus, omission is an appropriate solution here. However, if an *Oh* or *Ah* is added at the beginning or the end, the translation will be more equivalent. Because “Oh/Ah” conforms to English language conventions, and at the same time, the tone of emphasis is more prominent. Translation 2 converts the exclamatory sentence into a declarative one. Although the meaning of the sentence is conveyed, the emphasis function of the modal particle is not preserved.

3.4.3.2. Changing semantic focus

(28)

Source text	蒂	根	儿	就	蒙	事	啊	!
Chinese Pinyin	di	gen	er	jiu	meng	shi	A	
Glosses	absolutely			that	no	matter	Ø	
Literal meaning	There is nothing wrong at all Ø!							
English translation 1	It was just a hoax!							
English translation 2	Did you intend to die in the first place?							

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Princess Tiejing: He is pardoned? Then there is no need to kill myself?

The second Royal Uncle: It was just a hoax!

For this example, 啊 (a) is used to express that there is definitely nothing wrong at all, and to convey a relaxed and happy tone. Translation 1 uses changing semantic focus to change the negative sentence (source text) to a positive one, and it uses another way to convey the same meaning of the source text, that is, Empress Dowager Xiao is just joking with them. One can easily feel the relaxed tone through this positive sentence. If the solution omission is used, the translation would be “There is nothing wrong at all!”, and the relaxed and happy tone could not be felt, and the attitudinal aspect of MP 啊 (a) would be lost, so omission here is not appropriate. Translation 2 once again employs contextual adaptation, rewriting the source text

in a way that bears little semantic connection to the source text itself but aligns closely with the contextual meaning.

3.4.4. Imperative sentence

3.4.4.1. Omission

(29)

Source text	您	倒	是	快	点	说	啊	!
Chinese Pinyin	nin	dao	shi	kuai	dian	shuo	A	
Glosses	2sg	but		quickly		say	Ø	
Literal meaning	Why don't you just say it quickly?							
English translation 1	Tell me quickly!							
English translation 2	-							
My solution	Please let me know quickly!							

The context of this sentence is as follows:

The eldest Royal Uncle: You will need the little Prince's help again if you want to save your husband's life.

Princess Tiejing: Ah, how could the little Prince help?

The eldest Royal Uncle: Listen while I tell you.

Princess Tiejing: Tell me quickly!

In this scene, the Eldest Royal Uncle comes up with an idea to help and save Consort Silang's life, and Princess Tiejing is eager to know the idea. The function of 啊 (a) in the source text is to urge the listener to reveal his thoughts. The Princess uses 啊 (a) to express her anxiety and emphasizes that she urgently needs the Eldest Royal Uncle to carry out her instructions (to tell her about the idea). Another pragmatic function of 啊 (a) here is that 啊 (a) in the imperative sentence will bring a sense of intimacy, thereby narrowing the psychological distance from the listener, and the tone of the sentence will be milder. The status of the Princess is slightly inferior to that of her uncles, so her tone should be mild to reflect the cultural aspect. Here, the

translation used explicitation to change the focus from the first to the second person singular; from you to me. This will make the tone more moderate, but still not mild enough. If this sentence is translated as “Please let me know quickly!”, this will be more appropriate, because an imperative sentence beginning with “let” generally expresses a suggestion. It will be more gentle and more polite than an imperative sentence beginning with “do”. So by explicitation, the translation is on the one hand, in line with the urging tone of the original text, and on the other, it also makes the tone milder, and thus fits the two functions of 啊 (a).

3.4.4.2. Changing semantic focus

(30)

Source text 1	驸	马	爷	只	可	一	赦	,
Chinese Pinyin line 1	fu	ma	ye	zhi	ke	yi	she	
Glosses line 1	Prince Consort			only	can	one	forgive	
Source text 2	不	可	一	斩	哪	!		
Chinese Pinyin line 2	bu	ke	yi	zhan	A (NA)			
Glosses line 2	no	can	one	behead	Ø			
Literal meaning	The prince consort can only be pardoned, not be beheaded!							
English translation 1	He should be forgiven, instead of being killed.							
English translation 2	Please pardon him for our sakes.							

The context of this sentence is as follows:

Empress Dowager Xiao: What do you two come here for?

The eldest Royal Uncle: The Prince Consort committed a crime.

The second Royal Uncle: He should be killed.

The eldest Royal Uncle: However, as he usually is hard working.

The second Royal Uncle: He should be forgiven, instead of being killed.

This is a sentence that the Royal Uncles speak to Empress Dowager Xiao. Consequently, it is an example in which the speaker is regarded as inferior to the listener. The speaker uses 啊 (a)

to make his tone milder. However, English does not have the MP, so for the translation, if it is translated directly without the MP, the sentence will be felt as a command, which would be rude from a subordinate. Therefore, Translation 1 expresses this sentence in a suggested tone by changing the “only can” to “should”, and by shifting from a negative to a positive expression with the solution changing semantic focus, which makes the sentence milder and makes the tone more polite. If this sentence is translated literally, the hierarchy aspect will be lost. Translation 2 conveys only the literal meaning of the source text but fails to capture and translate the function of the modal particle.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter was motivated by the observation that the many Modal Particles (MPs) in Chinese, which are not present in English, necessitate solutions to address the structural imbalance in translation. As MPs in Chinese Xiqu are an important means of expressing tone and emotion, accurately translating these particles plays a vital role in helping readers understand the Xiqu text. The highest principle of translation is to express the meaning and the emotional tone of the source text. Based on an analysis of Chinese MPs in one Xiqu text, this chapter has examined the translation problems caused by the 1-null phenomenon and explored corresponding solutions. For the Chinese MPs, there is no exact way to translate them. However, based on this research, when MPs are translated, firstly, the Chinese sentence with MPs should be interpreted. Secondly, the translator should attempt to find a solution on the lexical level in English, and if not, find an applicable solution. In this study, four solutions that can be used to solve the translation problem of sentences with MPs are verified, namely omission, linguistic amplification, changing semantic focus, and explicitation.

When deciding which of these four solutions to use, the analysis in the chapter leads to the following conclusions: the solution of omission is usually used in cases of exclamative and declarative interrogative sentences. The characteristic of these two kinds of cases is that exclamative sentences, which are translated by “How” and “What a/an”, and declarative sentences with a questioning tone already express a strong tone; thus, although the MP is omitted in the translation, the tone of the sentences is still effectively conveyed. If the function

of 啊 (a) in the original text is to emphasize or highlight the tone, it is often used in translation with linguistic amplification. If, however, the function of 啊 (a) is to make the tone more moderate, or when the speaker is in a position of inferiority to the listener, the changing semantic focus is usually used, and if the source text were translated literally while omitting the MP 啊 (a), the tone and sentence meaning would differ from the source text, potentially leading to comprehension difficulties. In such cases, explicitation is often employed to convey the implied meaning.

Overall, the findings of this chapter highlight the importance of translating MPs and present solutions to adopt in the process of Chinese-English translations.

Given that the goal of this dissertation is to establish a comprehensive framework for the translation of Xiqu grounded in Pym's theoretical model, the translation solutions proposed here have been systematically mapped onto Pym's typology of translation solution types. The terms of these four translation solutions can be kept as they are without changing their names. I have summarized these translation solutions in a table, borrowing some of the content and type names from Pym's (2016a) translation solution types.

The table is as follows:

Material change	Text change	• Omission	When translating modal particles in exclamatory sentences and declarative-question sentences with a questioning tone.
		• Linguistic amplification	When translating modal particles used to emphasize or highlight the tone.
Expression change	Perspective change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing sentence focus • Changing semantic focus • Changing voice 	When translating modal particles used to soften the tone.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing sentence types 	
	Density change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explication 	When translating modal particles that, if omitted, would cause difficulty in understanding the literal meaning.

Table 4. translation solutions of MP 啊 (a) in Xiqu

Chapter Four: Case Study--Translation of Body-part Expressions in Xiqu

4.1. Introduction

Differences in conventional metaphors best illustrate the contrast between two cultures, as they often encode cultural heritage and reflect cultural distance. Body-part metaphors, as a typical example, pose challenges in cross-cultural translation due to these embedded differences.

Many studies have shown that human body-part expressions can express various emotions (e.g., Sharifian et al. 2008; Yu 2001, 2002 etc.). However, few researchers have made some analysis on how to translate body-part expressions, i.e., how to keep their emotional charge in the target language without any loss. The main purpose of this chapter is to attempt to analyze the differences in the functions and meanings of body-part expressions between Chinese and English based on a Chinese Xiqu text, thus, according to Pym's types of translation solutions (Pym 2016a), it is proposed which type of solutions are highly or frequently used to bridge this cultural gap.

In this chapter, I concentrate on the translation of body-part expressions shown in Chinese Xiqu text; this involves a combination of cultural analysis, translation and lexical semantics. For example, the phrase 肝肠痛断 *gan chang tong duan* 'liver and intestine broken' in Chinese is often used to describe someone who is very sad, while in English, people always use *heart-broken* to describe the feeling of sadness. I will discuss the semantic meaning of the body-part expressions 肝 *gan* 'liver' and 肠 *chang* 'intestine', and then analyze the solutions for translating.

In Section 2, I will discuss some previous research on body-part expressions, and in Section 3, I will present the framework. In the discussion of Section 4, I will present an analysis of the data based on the cases from the corpus I chose. Section 5 is a brief conclusion.

4.2. Literature review

4.2.1. Functional studies of body-part expressions

"Body-part expression" is a collective term that includes both external body-part words, such as the *face*, *hands*, and *head*, as well as internal body-part words, such as the *heart*, *liver*, and

gallbladder. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the function and meaning of body-part terms in Chinese. Yu (2002) used the external and internal classifications in his analysis of the function of body-part expressions. He provided a comprehensive analysis of the function of some body-part expressions. For example, *heart* has multiple meanings and can express various functions such as anger, anxiety, sadness, fear, happiness, etc. *xin-tou huo-qi* ‘heart-head fire-flare up’, which means ‘flare up with anger’, *xin-tong* ‘heart-paining’, which means ‘feel pained, distressed, or grieved’, *han-xin* ‘frigid-heart’, means ‘be bitterly disappointed; be afraid’, *kai-xin* ‘open-heart’, which means ‘happy; joyous; elated’.

Some studies focus on specific body-part expressions, Yu (2001) and Wierzbicka (2000), among others, argued that the face serves emotional and communicative functions across all cultures and languages. Yu showed in his article that in Chinese, *face* has many functions: it can highlight appearance, indicate emotion and character, focus interaction and relationship, and serve as the locus for dignity and prestige. Wierzbicka emphasised that it is important to note that the same facial expressions may also represent different emotions. For example, a *furrowed brow* may represent fear, anger, or sadness.

There are also some studies on the comparison of body-part expressions between English and Chinese. Yu (2009) compared and analyzed how happy or angry emotions are displayed through body-part expressions in Chinese and English. The result of his investigation showed that a notable descriptive difference between English and Chinese is that Chinese prefers to use more body-part expressions, especially internal organs, when describing anger and pleasure than English. For example, *gan huo* ‘liver fire’ means anger, while *man xin huan xi* ‘full-heart joy’ means happiness. In a recent article, Cheng (2021) conducted a comparative study of the function of *heart* and suggested that Chinese 心 *xin* ‘heart’ has two different mappings in English: one refers to ‘heart’ and the other denotes ‘mind’.

4.2.2. Studies of body-part metaphors and metonymies

In the above review, some articles also mentioned metaphors and metonymies, because the study of body-part expressions with metaphors and metonymies is inseparable. In traditional Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor is regarded as the core mechanism of language and

thought, while metonymy is often considered secondary or even subsumed under the broader category of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1993). However, Deignan (2005) pointed out that this central positioning of metaphor and marginalization of metonymy is not entirely accurate. Increasing research shows that many expressions originally classified as metaphors actually contain significant metonymic components or are primarily driven by metonymy. If metonymy is understood as a type of within-domain mapping based on bodily experience or physical contiguity, then many expressions traditionally regarded as metaphors can be reinterpreted as metonymies (Deignan 2005). To address this issue, scholars have begun to emphasize the interactive relationship between metaphor and metonymy rather than treating them as a strict binary opposition. Goossens (1995) was among the first to propose a classification framework of the “interaction of metaphor and metonymy”, highlighting common linguistic structures such as “metaphor within metonymy” and “metaphor from metonymy”. Overall, metaphor and metonymy often work together to construct meaning. From the perspective of translation, however, whether an expression is metaphorical or metonymic may not be the most critical issue. The core task of translation lies in accurately conveying the meaning of the source language, mainly its underlying conceptual intentions and cultural implications. Therefore, in practical translation work, more attention should be paid to effectively transmitting the overall meaning and pragmatic function of the source expression. Accordingly, in the following study of metaphors and metonymies involving body parts, I will not make a strict distinction between the two.

Body-part metaphors appear in all areas of everyday language use. These metaphors are not only widespread but also highly diverse, as they can involve both external parts of the body and internal organs. For example, in Chinese, the expression 冷眼 (leng yan, literally meaning ‘cold eyes’) signifies an indifferent attitude. This is an example of a metaphor related to external parts of the body (eye). The expression 胆大 (dan da, ‘gall is big’) conveys courage and represents a metaphor connected to internal organs (gall). In English, expressions like *a long face* indicate an unhappy or disappointed expression, which is a metaphor involving an external part of the body (face); another example is *swallow one’s gall*, a metaphor related to an internal organ (gall), which means trying hard to suppress one’s anger.

Without delving into a detailed analysis here, it can be noted that external body parts are typically used in a functional sense, often motivated metonymically (*There is a sea of faces in the streets*), while metaphors involving internal organs are more commonly used to express emotions (Yu 2009). In general, it can be stated that body-part metaphors can convey emotions (as in English: *vent one's spleen*, which means rage; in Chinese: 心痛 *xin tong*, 'heart hurt', which means feel sad), desires (as in Chinese: 眼红 *yan hong*, 'eyes are red', which means express someone's jealousy, implying a strong desire for something), activities (as in English: *lend a hand*, which means help somebody; in Chinese: 动嘴皮子 *dong zui pi zi*, 'move lips', which means be all talk and no action), and attitudes (as in English: *cold shoulder*, which means the attitude of indifference or apathy; in Chinese, 铁石心肠 *tie shi xin chang*, 'a heart of iron stone', which means the attitude of unfeeling). Body-part metaphors serve as a core source domain in the formation of conceptual metaphors (Bai 2009), and the metaphor of body-part expressions has been widely studied in various languages (Sharifian et al. 2008, Kraska-Szlenk 2020).

The study of the metaphorical meaning of body-part expressions is analyzed chiefly in cognitive linguistic terms. The human body is an ideal and primary source domain, and all languages make use of metaphors of the body-parts. The embodiment of meaning is the central idea of the cognitive linguistic view of meaning (e.g., Heine 1997, Kövecses 2010, Zahedi 2012). Benczes (2006) examined metaphor-based compounds by analyzing two established examples: *heartland* and *armchair*. In *heartland*, the compound's modifier indicates the location of the land, establishing a relationship where the land is situated in a specific space. For *armchair*, the semantic relationship between the constituents represents a part-whole form, with the arm serving as a component of the chair. There is also theoretical literature on body parts in cognitive semantics, Heine (1997) explored the relationship between human body parts and the conceptual transfer patterns associated with them, he suggested that body-part terms can be traced back to other concepts, (he gave the example of terms for "pupil", he mentioned it often derives from words denoting small or human like figures, such as *angel of the eye* in Quechua), and there is potential for one body-part term to transform into another (for example, terms for 'shoulder blade' called *kōwō káat*, which literally means bone of neck in Pokot).

Additionally, body-part terms can be utilized to generate terminology for other concepts (for example, from the body part ‘neck’ to the object part ‘narrow section of a container’). In the realm of Cognitive Semantics, it is proposed that our conceptual system heavily relies on the unique characteristics of our bodies and the cultural environment (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999).

With the gradual strengthening of the need for foreign language teaching and the emergence of the translation industry, several articles on the English-Chinese comparison of metaphorical perception of human organs have emerged. Some of the researchers analyzed the metaphors of body-part expressions in Chinese and English from multiple perspectives and concluded that there are different metaphorical expressions in Chinese and English (Chen 2012; Du and Hu 2009; Pan 2012; Gu 2014). For example, Pan (2012) examined and compared the Chinese-English idioms of “body-object metaphor” in the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, she argued that there are a large number of idioms of the “body-object metaphor” in both Chinese and English. The important source of such idioms is the human body, which is because people are familiar with the functions of various parts of their bodies, so they associate various functions with the phenomena that occur around them. For example, some of the metaphorical idioms of *hand* in English are usually based on metaphorical thinking, such as use *hand* to represent person, e.g.: *ask for somebody’s hand*, which means to propose to somebody (Here it is worth noting that, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, if the *hand* stands for the person, then this is a case of part-for-whole metonymy. Nevertheless, the entire idiom can be regarded as a metaphor. However, in translation, my focus is solely on conveying the original meaning and cultural significance). However, in Chinese, there is no such usage. Bai (2009) conducted a comparative analysis of metaphors involving internal organs in Chinese and English, identifying both similarities and differences, along with the underlying reasons. The study found that while the overall metaphorical perception of internal organs is largely consistent across the two languages, notable differences exist in specific details. In both languages, internal organs are commonly used to express human emotions metaphorically; however, the same organ may be associated with different emotions due to variations in its perceived function. Yu (2003) discussed the metonymic and metaphoric nature of Chinese

compounds and idioms involving body-part terms for *eye(s)* from a cross-linguistic perspective. He found that both English and Chinese share the conceptual metonymy PERCEPTUAL ORGAN STANDS FOR PERCEPTION and the conceptual metaphor SEEING IS TOUCHING, THINKING, KNOWING. Yu (2008) investigated the relationship between human body parts and cultural cognition by examining metaphorical expressions. He argued that conceptual metaphors arise from the dynamic interplay between bodily experience and culturally constructed meaning. The selection of bodily experiences for metaphors heavily depends on the cultural context. When two languages share similar cultural interpretations, they often share conceptual metaphors. For instance, both Chinese and English have the conceptual metaphors DIGNITY AS FACE and PRESTIGE AS FACE, demonstrating the overlap of metaphorical expressions influenced by shared cultural values.

Body part metaphors are pervasive in everyday languages and serve various functions (Li 2007), including expressing emotions and attitudes, among others. The study of these metaphors spans a vast body of literature, encompassing analyses across different languages. Therefore, the sheer volume of research in this area makes it challenging to explore in depth. Based on the above, there are specific cultural differences between the metaphorical meanings of body-part expressions in English and Chinese. Focusing on the distinct functions of various body parts, one can find some relevant discussions in the following literature:

In English, the **heart** is regarded as the *center* (Nacey 2004: 94), a *sign of emotion*, an *indicator of personality*, and a *symbol of treasure* (Cheng 2021). In Chinese, the heart also denotes the *center*, *space*, *object*, and *container* (Qi 2003:24). Additionally, it functions as a *container for emotion*, *indicator of personality*, *pivot of thought*, and a *container or seat for emotions* (Yu 2002), as well as a *symbol of treasure* (Cheng 2021).

In English, the **eyebrow** is an *indicator of one's emotions* (Wierzbicka 2000; Ekman and Friesen 1975). Similarly, in Chinese, it indicates *emotional states* (Yu 2002). Moreover, "*brows and eyes are such important features that they together actually stand for the whole face or looks in Chinese*" (Yu 2002).

The **eye** in English often involves conceptual metaphors such as *SEEING IS TOUCHING* (Lakoff 1993) and *THINKING/KNOWING/UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING* (Yu 2002). In Chinese, the eye functions as an *indicator of emotions and personality*, and as the *embodiment of thought* (Yu 2002).

The **head** in English symbolizes hierarchy or importance, such as the *top of an organization*, *top* or *most important part* (Nacey 2004: 98). In Chinese, it can represent *remnants of something* or an *indicator of emotional state* (Gu 2014).

The **face** carries similar metaphorical significance in both languages. In English, it is seen as the *highlight of physical appearance*, an *indicator of personality and character*, the *focus of interaction and relationship*, and the *locus for dignity and prestige* (Yu 2001: 1). These functions are mirrored in Chinese, where the face likewise represents *appearance and look*, *emotion and character*, *interpersonal focus*, and *dignity and prestige* (Yu 2001: 1).

Beyond the body parts discussed above, other body parts, such as liver, intestine, and so on, also exhibit distinct metaphorical associations in Chinese and English, which will not be further analyzed in this research. Since this study focuses on translation from Chinese as the source language, I will now explore some findings related to body-part metaphors in Chinese. Naran (2012) analyzed the body metaphor in Chinese. The main result of their investigation was that people perceive their body from the world, and they perceive the world from their body. In addition to systematic metaphorical studies of body-part expressions, some studies focus on a particular body-part. Yu compared “heart” and “mind” and showed that the use of *heart* as a thought (mind) is much less common in English than in Chinese (Yu 2003). Following the theory of conceptual metaphor, Yu (2007) again studied a predominant conceptual metaphor in the understanding of the *heart* in ancient Chinese philosophy.

The literature review here shows that at present, the analysis of body-part expressions in linguistics is mostly in semantic and functional research aspects, as well as metaphorical aspects, while there is a lack of specific discussion on how to translate body-part expressions. Some studies on the translation of body-part expressions also touch upon the translation of idioms, in which these body parts are embedded. For example, Chen (2012) discussed the translation of

human organs with the example of English and Chinese idioms. She believed that the translation of idioms is not only the conversion of language, but also the transmission of culture. She also proposed several solutions of translating idioms, such as the literal translation of retaining the image, for example *armed to the teeth* (the *teeth* is preserved in the Chinese translation), the flexible translation of converting the image, for example *to laugh off one's head* (in Chinese: to laugh off one's *teeth*), and the free translation, for example 三寸不烂之舌 *san cun bu lan zhi she*, which means 'three inches of unshakable tongue literally, means smooth talk' in English. Fang (2013) pursued proper translation strategies and practical methods to translate human body idioms with the national features and convey the meaning of the original based on Nida's equivalence theory. Wang (2013) conducted a case study based on Vinay and Darbelnet, exploring the translation solutions of English-Chinese idioms containing body-part words. She employed literary translation and free translation, including substitution, addition, elaboration, and omission, to analyze the translation solutions of body-part idioms. The problems I found in the translation of Xiqu are consistent with the results of the research on the translation of idioms between Chinese and English.

In summary, although metaphor has been explored from various perspectives, there is a lack of cross-cultural studies specifically addressing the translatability of body-part expressions between Chinese and English. Most existing research focuses on the functional differences of body parts in metaphorical usage across the two languages. Then, how to bridge such cultural differences is a further new question, which should be explored in depth. Translation studies of body-part expressions, on the other hand, focus precisely on the translatability of the information contained in conventional metaphors, which does not imply that there will be a one-to-one correspondence between two metaphors in two language cultures, thus, the primary challenge lies in selecting suitable translation solutions that can reconcile the differences and facilitate effective cross-cultural metaphor translation. The difference in metaphorical meaning between Chinese and English mentioned above is unrelated to genre or theme; rather, it reflects a fundamental linguistic fact. So, I assume that based on this difference, such a translation problem will also exist in Xiqu texts, in which body-part expressions are commonly found. In

response to this translation challenge, this chapter will explore the appropriate translation solutions for body-part metaphors in Chinese Xiqu.

4.3. Corpus

In *Silang Visits His Mother*, in the original Chinese text, I have found 56 body-part expressions, of which there are 20 types, and the most frequently appearing body-part is the “heart”, followed by the “eyebrow”, “head”, etc., see Figure 1.

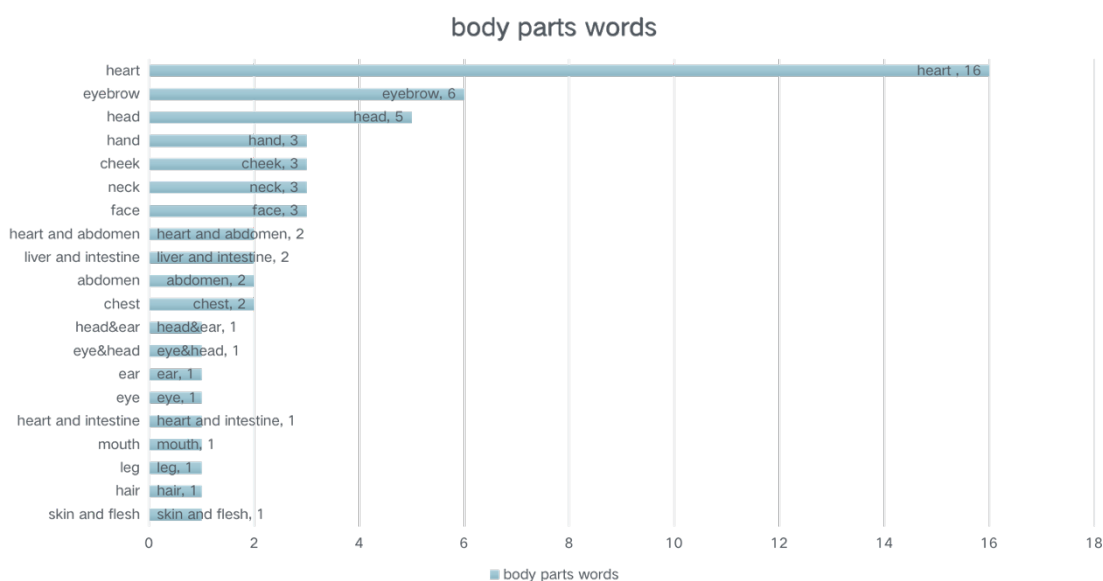


Figure 1. The number of body-part expressions in the corpus

While in English, based on Translation 1, there are only 22 body-part expressions, of these, 13 were translated one to one (1-1), which means that the body-part expressions in Chinese were equivalently translated into English. There are also 9 cases where the body-part expressions of the original and the translation are not the same but are replaced with other body-part expressions; this type will be referred to as one to X (1-X). Moreover, there are 34 examples where the body-part expressions disappeared in translation text, which is designated as one to null (1-null) in this chapter. (I will use Translation 1 as the basis for analysis; therefore, all data are drawn from Translation 1. In the case analysis, I will supplement this with Scott’s Translation 2 to examine the differences between the two translations in addressing specific translation problems.)

Among the 34 cases classified as 1-null, most examples are expressions of happiness, anger, or other emotional states in Chinese, whereas in English, these body-part expressions disappear because of the lack of correspondence. Such a difference hints at a potentially less direct relationship between body-part expressions and emotions in English than in Chinese, though broader data would be required to confirm this. As mentioned in Yu (2009), Chinese tends to utilize more body-part expressions, especially internal organs, when describing anger, happiness, and other emotional states than English. Yu’s analysis was conducted at the level of metaphorical studies, and I assume that this result can also be applied based on translation studies with a comparative method. As shown in the following examples¹⁸:

(1)

Source text	喜	在	心
Chinese Pinyin	xi	zai	xin
Glosses	happy	PRT	heart
English translation in the corpus (Translation 1)	feel happy in mind		

(2)

Source text	把	心	放	宽
Chinese Pinyin	ba	xin	fang	kuan
Glosses	BA	heart	put	wide
English translation in the corpus (Translation 1)	feel relieved			

(3)

Source text	心	悬
Chinese Pinyin	xin	xuan
Glosses	heart	pending
English translation in the corpus (Translation 1)	left in suspense	

Based on the fact mentioned above that in the entire Xiqu text, there are 56 body parts in the original Chinese (including 25 internal organs, as shown in Figure 1), while only 22 appear in the English version, I agree with Yu (2009)’s view that Chinese tends to use more body-part

¹⁸ These examples come from my corpus, one of Chinese Xiqu, *Silang Visits His Mother*.

expressions in its conventional emotional state phrases, which include happiness, tension, worry etc., among these body-part expressions expressing emotions, the internal organs are often used, and among these internal organs, *heart* is used more often, which is specified as a container of emotions.

4.4. Framework foundation

The research is conducted based on the translation solution types of Pym (2016a), which I have mentioned briefly in Chapter Two.

Pym (2018) proposed a default category, namely **cruise mode** translating, as when an airplane is cruising at altitude, all goes well until there is a ‘bump’, then attention is required, and something needs to be done. The typologies are used to deal with the ‘bump’ in the translation process. There are three main categories for maximum simplification, namely: **copying**, **expression change**, and **material change**, and there are other subcategories under them. As a result of Pym’s analysis, these translation solutions have not only a pedagogical role but also a role in expanding the repertoire of available solutions for novice translators. In the translation of the body-part expressions of this Xiqu, besides Cruise mode, the following translation solutions are also involved: Perspective change, Density change, Compensation, and Cultural correspondence. Now I will explain each of the involved translation solutions.

According to Pym (2018), **perspective change** refers to a replacement name for “modulation”, which was introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995). This translation solution always comes up when something needs to be approached from a different perspective. It includes “changing sentence focus”, “changing semantic focus”, “changing voice”, and so on. **Density change** includes some subtypes, such as “generalization”/ “specification”, “explicitation”/ “implicitation”, etc., which means there are significant variations in the amount of information available in a given text space. Translators can increase and reduce text density by using a solution that concentrates or allocates information to a smaller or larger text space. The standard solution, which under **compensation** is “new level of expression”, “new place in text”, according to Pym, “A value is rendered with resources different from those of the start text and in a textual position or linguistic level markedly different from that in the start text”

(Pym 2018). **Cultural correspondence** is considered when different elements from different cultures are presented to perform similar functions; the category broadly covers what Vinay and Darbelnet termed Adaptation and Equivalence (Pym 2018, Pym et al. 2020).

4.5. Discussion of translation solutions

Based on the framework of Pym's translation solutions, 1-1 solution use the **cruise mode**, which means normal uses of language skills, references resources, parallel texts, no special solutions are needed (Pym 2016a). Nine 1-X solution examples use the **cultural correspondence** of Pym, which brings together Vinay and Darbelnet's Adaptation and Equivalence, meaning that different elements in different cultures are presented as carrying out similar functions (Pym et al. 2020). For 34 1-null cases, some translation solutions of Pym were adopted, including 16 **cultural correspondence**, 16 **density change**, 1 **perspective change**, and 1 **compensation**.

If one consider about the distribution of translation solutions, the **cultural correspondence** is the very more often used solution when translate the body-part expressions, among them, especially when translate *heart*, *abdomen*, which means minds, thoughts, we should use **cultural correspondence**¹⁹, cause in English, there are few cases where *heart* means thought, so the word is often expressed with “mind” to mean thought. I will discuss this further later in this chapter. *Eyebrow* also appears often. In Chinese, an *eyebrow* often conveys the feelings of people. A *wrinkled eyebrow* means confused, concerned, sorrowful, etc. When translated into English, the **density change** is often used. To be specific, in the English translation, the solution of **generalization** is often used, which means that English always uses a general feeling, for example, “feel concerned”, while Chinese always describes the specific body part of the state with a pictorial expression, as ‘the worry brows wrinkled’.

¹⁹ Here, I use **cultural correspondence** to deal with “heart/abdomen” to “mind” translation (see detailed examples later in this chapter), but this term is somewhat misleading, as it gives the impression that nothing will be lost; the (other) body-part term will be presented. The original term, which is in the background of cultural correspondence by Pym, is Vinay and Darbelnet's Adaptation, which is preferable in this context, because the term Adaptation involves altering the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture. It expresses that the translator makes a conscious decision. As Zhang and Pan also mentioned, Adaptation involves shifts at the cultural level. (Zhang and Pan 2009)

As my corpus shows, the body-part expressions can be translated based on different solutions, as shown in Figure 2 below.

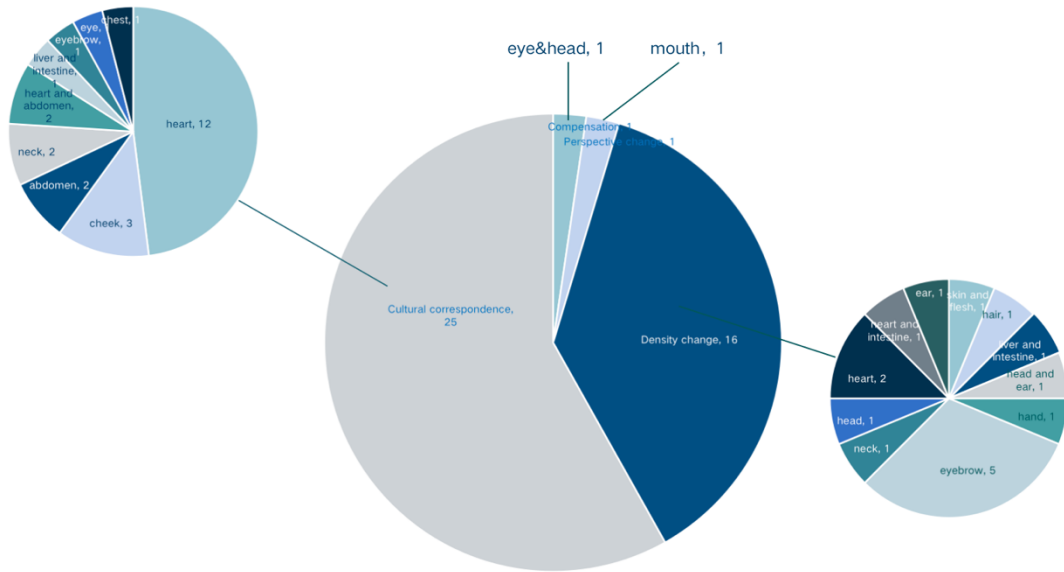


Figure 2. Distribution of translation solutions used for the translation of body-part expressions in the corpus

4.5.1. One to one solution (1-1)

4.5.1.1. Cruise mode

(4)

Source text	腿	都	疼	了
Chinese Pinyin	tui	dou	teng	le
Glosses	leg	already	hurt	MP
Literal translation	<i>legs</i> hurt			
English Translation 1	my <i>legs</i> hurt			
English Translation 2	my <i>legs</i> are tired			

This example is a simple description of pain or uncomfortable in a body-part. In the Chinese source text, 腿 *tui* ‘leg’ is translated into English as *leg* in both Translation 1 and Translation 2. This example uses the solution one to one, which means that the body-part expressions in Chinese were equivalently translated into English, if we consider of the Pym’s translation

solution type, it is just Cruise mode, which means normal use of language skills, and no special solutions are needed, and the translator do not need to be very decisive.

4.5.2. One to X solution (1-X)

4.5.2.1. Cultural correspondence: corresponding body parts

(5)

Source text	肝	肠	痛	断
Chinese Pinyin	gan	chang	tong	duan
Glosses	liver	intestine	hurt	broken
Literal translation	terribly pained in one's <i>liver and intestine</i>			
English Translation 1	terribly pained in my <i>heart</i>			
English Translation 2	I am faint thinking of...			

This sentence describes the speaker's sadness. The Chinese expression *liver and intestine* disappears in the English translation and becomes *heart* in Translation 1. This is the result of cultural differences, as demonstrated by research on Chinese-English idioms. In Chinese, 肝 *gan* 'liver' is often used in conjunction with other body organs to project different emotions, such as 肠 *chang* 'intestine'. When 肝 *gan* 'liver' used in conjunction with 肠 *chang* 'intestine', it can indicate a certain mood. Such as a. sad 肝肠痛断 (*gan chang tong duan*, 'terribly pained in liver and intestine'), b. anxious 肝肠如焚 (*gan chang ru fen*, 'liver and intestine are burning'). And when 肝 *gan* 'liver' is used in conjunction with 胆 *dan* 'gall', it can indicate a. sincere heart, 肝胆相照 (*gan dan xiang zhao*, 'treat one another with absolute sincerity'), b. courage 肝胆过人 (*gan dan guo ren*, 'have courage'), c. close relationship 肝胆楚越 (*gan dan chu yue*, 'two parties who have a close relationship become unconcerned or hostile to each other'). And in English, the meaning of *liver* always indicates courage, e.g., *lily-livered*. If we translate it as 'terribly pained in my liver and intestine' in English, readers will think that it is the body organs that are in pain, and not associate it with emotional grief.

In Chinese, 心 *xin* 'heart' can also be used to describe the emotion of sadness. For example, 心如刀绞 (*xin ru dao jiao*, 'heart like being cut by a knife'). The word 心 *xin* 'heart' is also very useful and commonly used in Chinese, as the (7) shows below.

Here, **cultural correspondence** serves as an appropriate translation solution, aligning body parts in the two languages to ensure readers can clearly understand the text’s meaning. However, Scott’s translation does not employ **cultural correspondence**. Instead, he omits the reference to body parts and adds “faint” before “thinking of my old mother,” indicating a state of weakness and dizziness. While this solution is acceptable, I contend that **cultural correspondence** better preserves the cultural and emotional nuances conveyed by body-part references, thereby enhancing the readers’ comprehension and the translation’s fidelity to the source text.

(3a)

Source text	愁	锁	眉	间
Chinese Pinyin	chou	suo	mei	jian
Glosses	worry	lock	brow	adv.
Literal translation:	the <i>brows</i> furrowed with sorrows			
English Translation 1	wearing a sorrowful <i>face</i>			
English Translation 2	his cares			

(3b)

Source text	眼	望
Chinese Pinyin	yan	wang
Glosses	eye	see
Literal translation	<i>seeing</i>	
English Translation 1	<i>facing</i>	
English Translation 2	look towards	

The two examples above in Translation 1 are relatively similar in that both use Cultural correspondence, and both translate and correspond from one body-part to another. In Chinese, expressions and emotions are often focused on specific body-part expressions or facial organs. For example, Chinese always uses the *eyebrow* to express the emotional states. Wrinkled eyebrows always show sorrowful feeling, while a relaxed brow is often used to show a cheerful mood. *Eyes*, on the other hand, are used to express the revealing of emotions, such as 眼(*eye*)

带笑意 (yan dai xiao yi, ‘eyes with smiling’), while *face* is often used in English to express the expression of emotions, such as *smiling faces*, *a look of intense concentration on her face*. Of course, in Chinese, there are also some instances that use a whole *face* to express emotions, just as in English, there are also examples that the *eye* can express emotions; however, the scope of this discussion pertains mainly to the most common instances. “Brows and eyes are such important features that they together actually stand for the whole face or looks” (Yu 2002). For example, in this Xiqu, 眼(eye)望 yan wang is translated as ‘facing’ instead of ‘seeing’.

In Translation 2, for (3a) “愁锁眉间 cou suo mei jian” (literally means sorrow locks the brows), Scott translates the implied meaning, omitting the reference to the body part. This solution is known as explicitation. Since the essence of the idiom is “sorrow” or “worry,” this translation as “his cares” is also acceptable; similar examples will be discussed in the examples that follow.

4.5.3. One to null solution (1-null)

4.5.3.1. Cultural correspondence

(4)

Source text	心	事
Chinese Pinyin	xin	shi
Glosses	heart	thing
Literal translation	something in one’s <i>heart</i>	
English Translation 1	on one’s <i>mind</i>	
English Translation 2	Something on one’s mind	

In Chinese, *heart* customarily refers to the organ of thought, mood, feeling, etc. For example, 心(heart)悦情服 (xin yue qing fu, ‘sincerely and willingly willing or obedient’), 心(heart)平气和 (xin ping qi he, ‘expressing a calm mood’) 心(heart)花怒放 (xin hua nu fang, ‘expressing a happy mood’) 心(heart)惊骨软 (xin jing gu ruan, ‘expressing a state of fear’), 铁石心(heart)肠 (tie shi xin chang, ‘expressing the heart and emotions are not moved by feelings’). In English, *heart* can also indicate mood: *heart-broken*, and indicate the personality: *good heart*, and indicate courage: *lose heart*.

It can be observed that in both languages, the word *heart* has the meaning of indicating mood. This is because in any ethnic group, the *heart* is felt in different moods, with a faster heartbeat when nervous and a regular heartbeat when relaxed. In Chinese, the word *heart* is commonly used to indicate both sadness and happiness, but in English, it often indicates sad moods and emotions. Moreover, in English, *heart* can also mean “courageous”, but there is no such usage in Chinese, which mainly considers 胆 *dan* ‘gall’ as the organ that produces courage. Another difference is that in English, there are few cases where *heart* means thought, so the word is often changed to *mind* to mean thought²⁰. Therefore, as in the above example, the Chinese word with *heart* becomes *mind* when translated into English in both Translation 1 and Translation 2. This example uses Cultural correspondence in Pym’s translation solution types; here, *heart* and *mind* have the same function, and the English word *mind* represents *brain thought*, where *heart thought* and *brain thought* form a cultural correspondence. There are 10 examples similar to this example in this Xiqu text, such as 心(*heart*)暗转 *xin an zhaun* is translated as ‘think what to do’, and 巧计在心(*heart*)间 *qiao ji zai xin jian* is translated as ‘have thought of a clever trick’, and 喜在心 *xi zai xin (heart)* is translated as ‘feel happy in mind’. There are various organs in Chinese that can be used as repositories for mind or thought, such as *heart* in this example and *abdomen* mentioned in the next example, but there are no such uses in English, which means that all these cases will be translated using Cultural correspondence to make the meaning of the text more understandable.

(5)

Source text	满	腹	机	关
Chinese Pinyin	man	fu	ji	guan
Glosses	full	abdomen	ideas	
Literal translation	the ideas are full of <i>abdomen</i>			
English Translation 1	things in <i>mind</i>			
English Translation 2	hidden secret/ inner thoughts			

²⁰ “In Western cultures, there is a binary contrast between the heart and the mind. The mind is the location of thought, whereas the heart is the seat of emotions. On the other hand, this distinction between the heart and the mind does not exist in traditional Chinese culture.” (Yu 2003)

This example is similar to the one above. In Chinese, the word 腹 *fu* ‘abdomen’ is similar to 心 *xin* ‘heart’; it also has the meaning of center and interior. For example, 腹地 *fu di* means ‘the area around the center, the interior’, and the abdomen is also a body-part container carrying ideas, plans, etc. in Chinese, and it is often used in conjunction with 心 *xin* ‘heart’ as 心腹 *xin fu* ‘heart, abdomen’. In the example of the Xiqu mentioned in this chapter, besides 心事 (*xin shi*, ‘things in heart’), there are also several occurrences of 心腹事 (*xin fu shi*, ‘things in heart and abdomen’), which has the same meaning as the former. While in English, there is no metaphor for the abdomen, which is only used as a body organ, according to a dictionary check. There are no cases where ‘abdomen’ means ‘thought’, so the word is often changed to ‘mind’ to mean ‘thought’. Therefore, as in the above example, the Chinese word for *abdomen* becomes ‘mind’ or ‘thought’ when translated into English.

4.5.3.2. Density change: Generalization

(6)

Source text	愁	眉	不	展
Chinese Pinyin	chou	mei	bu	zhan
Word by word translation	worry	brow	no	release
Literal translation:	the sad brows wrinkled			
English Translation 1	look concerned/ feeling sorrowful			
English Translation 2	frowning and unsmiling			

“Eyebrows are perceived in Chinese as one of the most obvious indicators of emotional states” (Yu 2002). The body-part in this example is also *eyebrow*, but it uses a different solution rather than the Cultural correspondence in Translation 1. It uses “generalization”, which falls under the category of Density change in Pym’s translation solutions, which express the overall feeling, thus removing possible misunderstanding. Again, this involves the fact that Chinese is a pictorial language, and in the original language, we can have a clear picture that the person described has a frown on his face. The translation, on the other hand, shows the sad face of the person described in another dimension, that is, he looks worried. There is another translation version that Scott does in Translation 2, which uses *frowning and unsmiling*, which is not bad,

but I think it is more appropriate to translate feeling directly. In the original, the word 愁 *chou* ‘worry’ indicates the emotion of frowning. Because a variety of emotions can cause the action of frowning, Scott’s translation only explains the action of frowning and unsmiling, without indicating the emotion.

(7)

Source text	哭	得	肝	肠	坏
Chinese Pinyin	ku	de	gan	chang	huai
Glosses	cry		liver	intestine	broken
Literal translation	Cry to the <i>liver and intestines</i> broken				
English Translation 1	have a good cry				
English Translation 2	-				

In (2), I have already analyzed *liver and intestines*. The word *liver and intestines* in this example also mean sadness and heartbroken, and in the original text, 哭得肝肠坏 *ku de gan chang huai* ‘crying to the liver and intestine broken’ can alternatively be translated as ‘crying with a broken heart’, therefore, in the translation, the solution of **cultural correspondence** can be used, which is to correspond *liver and intestines* in Chinese with *heart* in English, and use *heart* as the translation. In this case, Translation 1 adopts the **generalization** in Pym’s solution, converting the specific form of crying into a *good cry* in general, changing the amount of information in the given textual space. It is in line with English language conventions not to translate *liver and intestines* directly. While in Translation 2, this sentence was not translated. Moreover, as mentioned above, this example can also be translated as ‘crying with a broken heart’.

4.5.3.3. Text change: Omission

(8)

Source text	耳	旁	又	听
Chinese Pinyin	er	pang	you	ting
Glosses	ear	adv	again	listen

Literal translation	by the <i>ear</i> I listen
English Translation 1	[null]..+hearing
English Translation 2	[null]..+I hear

In this example, the body part is omitted. In the original text, the body-part *ear* is presented, followed by *listen*. If the translation follows the literal meaning, it is ‘by the ear I listen’, but the translation uses the solution of **omission**, omitting the body-part and directly using *hearing...*, this translation solution better aligns with English language conventions, as it avoids redundancy. The translation by the sinologist Scott is also similar, as *[null]...+ I hear*.

This solution is not included in Pym’s framework because Pym views omission not as a solution but as a phenomenon. According to him, if certain items are omitted, another solution must have been employed to replace the omitted elements. However, since omission is frequently used in Xiqu translation, I believe it should still be considered a translation solution. I categorize it under the **material change** category because omission results in a certain degree of textual alteration.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter explores the translation of body-part words and expressions in Chinese and English, with a particular focus on how to bridge the cultural differences between them. Special attention is given to the translatability of information embedded in conventional metaphors, as there is often no one-to-one correspondence between metaphorical expressions across linguistic and cultural systems. To address this gap, the chapter adopts various translation solutions, with the core objective being to demonstrate how body-part expressions can be effectively translated between Chinese and English.

In the context of Xiqu, body-part terms frequently appear, as they are deeply metaphorical and capable of conveying rich emotional content. However, significant differences between Chinese and English body-part metaphors pose challenges for translation. In some cases, equivalent meanings are conveyed using different body parts in the two languages; in other cases, Chinese body-part metaphors lack any direct equivalent in English. These differences

call for careful analysis and the use of appropriate translation solutions to ensure that the intended meaning and emotional nuance are preserved in the target language.

Through the above discussion, the evidence was provided that Pym’s translation solutions can be used in the translation of body-part expressions in Xiqu. Results indicated that there were three cases in translation (1) 1-1 translation: when the meaning of the body part is the same in both Chinese and English, the original body-part expressions can be translated directly without changing. These cases aligns with Pym’s **cruise mode**, (2) 1-X translation: when the meaning of the body part in Chinese is conveyed using a different body part in English translation, this corresponds to **corresponding body parts** which under the type of **cultural correspondence**, and (3) 1-null translation: a suitable body-part cannot be found as a translation counterpart, in which case a variety of solutions can be used. The solutions include **cultural correspondence**, which involves **corresponding culture-specific items**. For example, in Chinese, “心 xin”, heart, is used to represent the container of thought, while in English, terms like “mind” or “think” are commonly used to convey the same idea. The solutions also include **density change**, which involves **generalization** and **explicitation**. Chinese often uses pictorial language to depict emotions in great detail, such as “愁眉不展 chou mei bu zhan”, lit. worry brow not stretch, which does not have a direct equivalent in English. In such cases, **explicitation** can be used to translate the implied meaning of the body part description, such as translating it as “look concerned”. **Generalization** can also be applied, where the specific body part expression in Chinese is generalized into a broader description to convey the meaning, such as translating “哭得肝肠坏 ku de gan chang huai”, lit. cry to liver and intestine broken, as “have a good cry”.

Although the research is based on a case study of a Chinese Xiqu corpus, it proposes translation solutions for body-part expressions applicable in general.

At this point, the translation solutions are summarized in Table 5 based on Pym’s typology.

Material change	Text change	Omission	Omit redundant body parts that appear in the translation
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Expression change	Density change	Generalization	Generalize specific body parts in Chinese into a broader conceptual expression
		Explication	Translate the implied meaning of body parts
	Cultural correspondence	Corresponding body parts	Translate different body parts with the same metaphor
		Corresponding culture-specific items	Correspond words with the same meaning to body parts.

Table 5. Translation solutions of body-part expressions in Xiqu

Chapter Five: Case Study--Translation of Four-character-idioms in Xiqu

5.1. Introduction

Idioms in Western languages are interpreted as multi-word expressions, such as *being over the moon* or *don't count your chickens before they hatch*; they are omnipresent across languages and one of their intriguing features is that their meaning is not compositional (Rahmtallah 2024). Furthermore, their use is often related to a particular group of people or a social or cultural network. This means that their meaning cannot be understood without its accompanying cultural background in many cases. These two reasons, the problem of the literal translation and the problem of the transferability of the cultural meaning encoded in the idiom, are the most challenging features of idioms for translators, especially when the language pairs and the two cultures are not strongly interrelated. This is the case when we try to translate Chinese idioms into English.

Usually, in Chinese, there is a group of expressions called 习语 Xiyu, or idioms, including 成语 chengyu (four-character idioms), 谚语 yanyu (proverbs), and 歇后语 xiehouyu (two-part allegorical sayings).

(1) chengyu²¹

Source text	拔	苗	助	长
Chinese Pinyin	ba	miao	zhu	zhang
Glosses	pull out	seedling	help	grow
Literal translation	pull up the seedling and help it grow taller			
My translation	violating the law of the development of things or rushing to achieve results will lead to bad results			

(2) yanyu

Source text	上	梁	不	正	下	梁	歪
Chinese Pinyin	shang	liang	bu	zheng	xia	liang	wai

²¹ These three examples are idioms that are very often used in daily life in Chinese. There is no specific literary source for them.

Glosses	up	beam	no	straight	down	beam	crooked
Literal translation	if the upper beam is not straight, the lower beam will be crooked						
My translation	subordinates imitate their superiors' vices						

(3) xiehouyu

Source text	铁	打	的	公	鸡	——	一	毛	不	拔
Chinese Pinyin	tie	da	de	gong	ji	--	yi	mao	bu	ba
Glosses	iron-made		rooster		--	one	fur	no	pluck	
Literal translation	an iron-made rooster -- not a hair can be plucked									
My translation	stingy people									

These idioms are fixed phrases or words that are customarily used in Chinese, mostly from ancient literary works, which are widely circulated and often contain profound cultural connotations. Among them, four-character idioms are the most numerous and frequently used. According to statistics, there are over 50,000 idioms (chengyu) in total, 96% of which follow the four-character structure; however, there are also three, five, or even more than seven-character idioms²², for example, 闭门羹 *bi men geng*, lit. closed-door soup, which means refusal to let somebody in, 桃李满天下 *tao li man tian xia*, lit. peach and plum fill the world, which means an abundant harvest of talent, 醉翁之意不在酒 *zui weng zhi yi bu zai jiu*, lit. a drinker not interested in alcohol, which means accomplishing something besides what one set out to do. Kang and Yang (2022) observed that Chinese four-character idioms are established expressions, each consisting of four Chinese characters, that have been in use for an extended period within the Chinese language. A Chinese four-character idiom can be seen as a single language unit, or a word, but it has richer meanings than a word.

The research object of this chapter is the English translation of Chinese four-character idioms (later shortened to “idioms”). As cultural vocabulary items that frequently appear in Xiqu, idioms should not be overlooked if the content of Xiqu is to be effectively translated. This chapter aims to examine, through a limited set of examples, whether the four translation solutions (they use the term “strategy”) summarized by Wang and Wang (2013) – namely, literal translation, free translation, abridged translation, and borrowing translation – can be

²² <https://baike.baidu.com/item/成语/71626>

applied to the English translation of idioms in Chinese Xiqu. Additionally, it seeks to identify which of these solutions is used more frequently than the other three.

In this chapter, I will first review the literature on the translation of Chinese idioms; secondly, I will introduce the theoretical background of the topic in section 3; this will be followed by an introduction of the corpus and a discussion with examples of the problems which should be dealt with in the translation of idioms in Xiqu in section 4. Finally, I will evaluate my results and draw conclusions. I do not dive into the vast literature on idiom research in general, nor do I intend to provide an overview of the current research topics on idioms (but see Burger 2007), as my aim is more practical: to illustrate the solutions used to translate Chinese idioms into English.

5.2. Literature review

Many books and articles discuss the origin of Chinese idioms (e.g., Ma 1962 and 1978, Shi 1979, Xiang 1982, Xing 1986, Huang and Liao 1991, Wang 2006, Shao 2007). For example, Ma (1978: 89) believed that the basic forms of Chinese idioms are four-syllable idioms and proverbs, and two-part allegorical sayings, etc., which are kinds of fixed phrases. The fixed nature and the idiomatic, historical, and national characteristics of idioms are what distinguish them from general phrases. In addition to research on the origins and introduction of Chinese idioms, there are also many complex fields of study in Chinese idiom research, encompassing a variety of linguistic issues such as structure, cognition, semantics, and semantic rhyme prosody, etc., which will not be explained further in this chapter. The chapter aims to study the problem of translating idioms.

There has been considerable exploration of idiom translation by both Chinese and European linguists. In her 1991 work on translation studies, British translation scholar Baker discussed strategies for idiom translation with English as the source language. Baker proposed four primary strategies for translators when handling idiomatic and culturally loaded words and expressions: employing an idiom with an equivalent meaning and form (complete equivalence), using an idiom with an equivalent meaning but a different form (partial equivalence), translating through paraphrase, and omitting the idiom in translation. Bassnett (2013) and Venuti (1995)

examined and expanded upon Baker's strategies for idiom translation, contributing to discussions on linguistic and cultural translation methods. The aforementioned studies reflect the research on idiom translation methods with non-Chinese source languages as the corpus. This chapter, however, focuses on idiom translation with Chinese as the source language. Therefore, the following literature will provide a more detailed review of studies by researchers on the translation of Chinese idioms.

Kang and Yang's (2022) study aligns with my translation research. They also examined Chinese four-character idioms and argued that a Chinese idiom is a longstanding phrase with a fixed structure, typically consisting of four Chinese characters. Kang and Yang believed that Chinese four-character idioms have various origins, such as fables, myths and legends, historical events, and so on, and that Chinese four-character idioms also have specific characteristics, such as fixed structure, conciseness, etc. The authors proposed three practical strategies for translating Chinese four-character idioms, namely "literal translation", "free translation", and "the combination of literal and free translation". It is undeniable that these three strategies apply to the translation of any linguistic unit from any source language to any target language. However, for culturally loaded words and expressions, such as idioms, there may be more suitable translation strategies.

Given that Chinese idioms, including *chengyu* (four-character idioms), proverbs, and *xiehouyu* (two-part allegorical sayings), all use concise language to convey deeper meanings, I believe that the translation solutions for these various types of Chinese idioms can be applied interchangeably. Using the broader category of idioms as the research focus, I conducted a literature review and analysis. Abdessamad (2023) examined the translation solutions for Chinese idioms as a whole, without further subdividing them. He argued that different cultural elements should be dealt with appropriately when translating idioms to avoid misunderstandings and cultural deficiencies, and he used domestication and foreignization as the solution for idiom translation. Domestication is a translation solution that adapts the text to fit the culture of the target language, sometimes at the cost of losing details from the original. On the other hand, foreignization focuses on keeping the original meaning intact, even if it means intentionally going against the norms of the target language. He believed that adopting

domestication as the main strategy in translating Chinese idioms into English is undoubtedly important. However, a balanced approach should be followed, with domestication as the main strategy and foreignization as a supplement, since if translators cater to target language readers in dealing with cultural differences, they may make readers lose the enjoyment of certain unique aspects of Chinese idioms, which may not be conducive to the sustainable development of Chinese culture.

Fan (2007) mentioned that cultural differences are the source of difficulties in translating idioms, and that Chinese idioms are shaped by the socio-cultural values of Chinese culture, so combining cultural, contextual, cognitive, and linguistic phenomena in translating idioms is needed. When translating, the pragmatic meaning should take precedence over the literal meaning, and the literal meaning should be preserved to the maximum extent possible while guaranteeing the pragmatic meaning. The strategies for translating idioms that she discussed are: annotation, which preserves the idiom's unique cultural essence and contributes to the diversity of global languages and cultures; semantic translation, which conveys the original message while maintaining cultural nuances, thus fostering intercultural communication; and communicative translation, applied when semantic translation may lead to the misinterpretation of the idiom's literal or connotative meanings, or when the idiom becomes unclear or challenging to understand, necessitating modifications to enhance comprehensibility in translation.

Wang and Wang (2013) observed distinct differences between English and Chinese idioms, examining these variations through the lenses of religious beliefs, historical allusions, and regional traditions. These cultural differences create some difficulties in translation, so some solutions need to be used. The first solution they proposed is Nida's (1993) translation theory of literal translation, which holds that literal translation can preserve the characteristics of the original culture and effectively disseminate it. Some examples are given, such as 知识就是力量 *zhi shi jiu shi li liang*, lit.: knowledge is power, in English: knowledge is power, which is the same expression and has the same meaning in both Chinese and English. In some cases where literal translation is not possible, such as when the culture of the source language cannot be understood by the readers of the target language, they suggested using free translation. In

addition, they claimed that Chinese idioms often feature a parallel dual structure, employing two distinct metaphors to convey the same idea. In such cases, translators may adopt an abridged translation approach to omit redundant parts. The final solution is borrowing translation. They argued that regardless of the cultural differences between countries, feelings and social experiences share commonalities, that is to say, these idioms in different languages will have something in common. In this case, the translator can use the borrowing translation solution to translate such idioms into the other language.

Overall, this literature review aimed to explore the existing solutions/strategies for idiom translation. Several scholars, including Baker (1991) and Abdessamad (2023), have explored the challenges of idiom translation, emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural meaning. Others, such as Fan (2007) and Wang and Wang (2013), have specifically studied the translation of Chinese idioms. However, few studies address the translation of idioms within the context of Chinese Xiqu specifically. Therefore, I aim to examine whether these translation solutions are equally applicable in the context of Xiqu. To this end, I employed the solutions proposed by Wang and Wang (2013), with a detailed analysis presented in the following section.

5.3. Theoretical framework

The four solutions suggested by Wang and Wang (2013) form the basis of the theoretical framework in this chapter. Their translation solutions are suitable for English translation of idioms in Xiqu (as summarized in Table 6 below). Literal translation means that some idioms translated literally have already become naturalized in the target language, to the extent that most speakers no longer realize they originated elsewhere. Wang and Wang give some examples, such as *blood is thicker than water*, *water drips over a stone*, etc., these expressions can be translated literally because they share both form and meaning across the two languages, so the English speakers will feel the original culture of the idiom, because for these exact idioms, they share the same culture. Wang and Wang (2013) are of the view that literal translation is the most basic way of translating idioms.

Free translation is a translation solution that can be considered when literal translation cannot be used, which allows the translator to adjust the translation according to the actual meaning

and context of the idioms to ensure its natural fluency in the target language. For example, translating 井底之蛙 *jing di zhi wa*, lit.: the frog at the bottom of the well, as “a person with a narrow perspective” can more accurately convey the meaning of the idiom. In the case of significant cultural differences, free translation can avoid misunderstandings brought about by literal translation and better convey the intention and emotion of the original text.

According to Wang and Wang (2013), in Chinese idioms, there is commonly a paralleling dual structure, that is to say, the use of two different metaphors to express the same meaning, in which case an abridged translation can be used. The analyses presented later in this chapter show that this solution is used most often in the translation of idioms in Xiqu, because some idioms using two or more different metaphors to express the same meaning often appear in Xiqu, which makes the Chinese lyrics of the Xiqu more rhythmic and aesthetically pleasing. When translating into English, on the other hand, if all the words are translated straight, this will not be catchy, but will make the translation redundant and cumbersome. For example, in my text, there is an idiom 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang jian ji*, lit.: knife, spear, sword, and halberd, the translation uses an abridged translation to generalize this four-word idiom, directly translating it as “the weapons”²³.

The essence of borrowing translation is that it borrows familiar expressions from the target language, which can enhance the target readers’ understanding and the resonance of the text. This solution is more often used in examples with cultural correspondences, where certain words from the target language’s culture can be directly corresponded to the original text, thus achieving the best translation effect.

Solutions	Explanation
Literal translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retain the original cultural characteristics • successfully spread the original culture • idioms and proverbs are the same in terms of form of expression and meaning

²³ See Example (6) in this chapter for details.

Free translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • its advantage lies in being succinct and distinct • benefits the style of writing • prevents certain messy cases caused by literal translation
Abridged translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removes the repeating parts • the same meaning of the idioms should be expressed using different methods
Borrowing translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retains the vivid image, the rhetorical effect, and the ethnic characteristics of the original idioms²⁴

Table 6. Solutions employed in idiom translation by Wang and Wang (2013: 1694)

5.4. Corpus

Because of Xiqu’s refined language, Xiqu usually contains many idioms. *Silang Visits His Mother* contains a large number of idioms, among which four-character idioms amount to a total of about 30; since four-character idioms are also representative of Chinese culture, and each idiom contained in this Xiqu is rich in profound culture, it is worth considering and analyzing them for translation. My data pool is relatively limited, consisting of 30 four-character idioms. Through the application of the translation solutions discussed in this chapter, the translated texts have utilized the four solutions I examined. However, analyzing all 30 examples would lead to redundancy, as many share similar translation solutions. Therefore, I have selected 9 representative examples to illustrate which translation solutions are appropriate to use in different contexts. I will use Translation 1 as the primary basis for analysis; therefore, all the data presented is derived from Translation 1. In the case analyses, I will supplement this with Scott’s Translation 2 to examine the differences between the two translations in addressing

²⁴ Here, regarding “ethnic characteristics”, I think it may be an overstatement. It would be more accurate to say that certain cultural nuances or stylistic features can be retained, but not the full ethnic identity of the original idiom.

specific translation problems. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the limitations of my study due to the small sample size of the corpus.

5.5. Results and discussion

5.5.1. Literal translation

(4)

Source text	谢	天	谢	地
Chinese Pinyin	xie	tian	xie	di
Glosses	thank	heaven	thank	earth
Literal translation	thank heaven and thank earth			
English Translation 1	thank heaven and earth			
English Translation 2	I thank the gods			

The example here uses literal translation. The original text is an idiom and a word often used in Chinese to express a tone of exclamation that indicates an attitude of gratitude at the occurrence of an event, thus expressing gratitude to fate. In the context of Chinese culture, there are heavenly palaces in our myths, which are inhabited by immortals, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, etc. In contrast, the word “gods” appears more often in European cultures. In English, the common expression of exclamation and thanksgiving for good fortune is often *Thank God* or *Thank goodness*, as shown in Translation 2, which, if the source language idiom in the above example is translated in this way, is not in line with Chinese culture. The literal translation maintains the metaphorical and national characteristics of the original idiom, and also achieves the intended mood of exclamation, and has thus already achieved the purpose of translation.

5.5.2. Free translation

(5)

Source text	插	翅	难	飞
Chinese Pinyin	cha	chi	nan	fei
Glosses	insert	wing	difficult	fly
Literal translation	even given wings, one couldn't fly			

English Translation 1	stop me from crossing the border
English Translation 2	even if I had wings it would be difficult

One of the challenges we face when translating idioms into other languages is how to maintain the original meaning while making them more appealing and comprehensible to the target language audience. In this case, the idiom “插翅难飞 cha chi nan fei” contains very vivid and compelling imagery. It is not only a metaphor, but also an expression of emotion, highlighting the helplessness and constraints people feel in difficult situations. The idiom of “插翅难飞 cha chi nan fei” initially describes that it is challenging to fly even if one is given wings, and this idiom is usually used to describe a situation from which it is difficult to escape.

Although the literal translation, as Translation 2 shows, expresses the same concept, the free translation provides a more concrete and vivid scenario, and the translation of *Stop me from crossing the border* transforms the abstract meaning of this idiom into a more concrete scenario, which may be the case of someone trying to escape from a predicament but encountering obstacles and limitations, and so being unable to complete the escape. Such a translation not only intuitively conveys the meaning of the original text but also provides a more concrete and understandable scenario for the audience, thus making it easier to resonate.

(6)

Source text	琵琶	琵琶	别	弹
Chinese Pinyin	pi	pa	bie	tan
Glosses	pipa (the pipa is the Chinese lute)		another	play
Literal translation	play a different pipa song			
English Translation 1	fall in love with someone else			
English Translation 2	wish to take a concubine			

When it comes to idioms whose meanings are derived²⁵, especially those with literary connotations such as 琵琶别弹 *pi pa bie tan*, the use of free translation can better convey the meanings of idioms and the emotions of the speaker. The idiom of “琵琶别弹 pi pa bie tan” is

²⁵ In Chinese, the original idiom is 琵琶别抱 *pi pa bie bao*, lit. Pipa another hold. In the corpus, the word “抱 bao” is derived as “弹 tan”, which is a slight adjustment of the literal meaning, but the intended meaning is the same.

a vivid idiom used to describe the situation where a person abandons his old love for a new one, implying a change of emotions.

Therefore, when translated into English, the literal translation of 琵琶别弹 *pi pa bie tan* expresses the literal meaning of the idiom. However, it fails to capture the emotion and the meaning it implies, and the literal translation is confusing. In contrast, the free translation solution, such as *fall in love with someone else* and *wish to take a concubine*, can more accurately convey the meaning of the idiom and the emotions expressed by the speaker, and at the same time, it is closer to the context and understanding of the English-speaking audience. Such a translation solution enables readers to understand more intuitively the feelings and emotions expressed in the idioms, and thus better appreciate the meaning and significance contained in them.

In this example, I believe Translation 2 is more appropriate than Translation 1 because it not only conveys the intrinsic meaning of the idiom through free translation but also indirectly introduces an aspect of ancient Chinese culture. In traditional Chinese society, it was common for men to have multiple wives and concubines. By using the phrase “take a concubine”, the translation not only reflects the idiom’s meaning of “fall in love with someone else” but also effectively communicates this ancient cultural phenomenon.

5.5.3. Abridged translation

In this chapter, examples classified as “abridged translation” include cases where there is semantic redundancy in the source language expression. For instance, certain four-character idioms contain two semantically repetitive components, or the four characters as a whole convey similar or identical meanings. In this context, the translation solution of abridged translation compresses the redundant content to achieve conciseness and readability in the target language, while striving to preserve the core meaning of the source text.

(7)

Source text	秦	楼	楚	馆
Chinese Pinyin	qin	lou	chu	guan

Glosses	Qin	building	Chu	building
Literal translation	the buildings with the surname of Qin and Chu			
English Translation 1	brothel			
English Translation 2	Pavilion of Ch'in and the Ch'u Hall (+footnote: these are euphemistic terms for the sing-song girl quarters)			

This idiom is composed of two pairs of words, namely *qin lou* and *chu guan*. During the Spring and Autumn Period (770–221 BC in ancient China), the daughter of Duke Mu²⁶ of Qin, Nongyu, was very good at playing xiao (a traditional Chinese instrument), so Duke Mu of Qin built her a Fenglou, also called the Qin Building, where Nongyu played the xiao for fun. King Ling of Chu²⁷ was a lecherous man, and he built the Zhanghua Palace, selecting the most beautiful women in the country to live there for his pleasure; people called Zhanghua Palace the Chu Building. Therefore, later on, people used the idiom “秦楼楚馆 *qin lou chu guan*” to refer to places of singing and dancing, and subsequently, it mostly referred to brothels. If we translate it as *the buildings with the surnames of Qin and Chu*, although it expresses the literal meaning, it cannot accurately convey the meaning of the original text. Translation 1 uses the solution of abridged translation, which generalizes the two kinds of places and translates them with a general term, which is straightforward, improves the reading experience for readers, and reduces the barriers to understanding idioms.

While Translation 2 employs the solution of literal translation combined with annotation, which can be seen as a form of compensation, this approach is also feasible for translating Xiqu scripts. On one hand, it preserves the original culture; on the other hand, unlike subtitles or live performances, scripts offer the space to provide additional explanations, helping clarify the meaning for readers. Therefore, I advocate for the use of the literal translation + annotation solution when translating Xiqu scripts.

(8)

²⁶ 秦穆公 qin mu gong, Duke Mu of Qin, the first substantial king of Qin (ruled 659–621 BC)

²⁷ 楚灵王 chu ling wang, King Ling of Chu (ruled 540–529 BC)

Source text	刀	枪	剑	戟
Chinese Pinyin	dao	qiang	jian	ji
Glosses	knife	spear	sword	halberd
Literal translation	knife, spear, sword and halberd			
English Translation 1	weapons			
English Translation 2	the swords, spears and arrows			

When we deal with translations of idioms that contain multiple items or concepts, sometimes a literal translation of each item may result in redundant information. In such cases, the use of abridged translation can convey the meaning of the original text more effectively, while ensuring that the translation is concise and fluent. As in this example, it is an idiom consisting of the names of four different tools with the same attributes, which are four common weapons used for slashing and stabbing in ancient China. Translating the idiom as *knife, spear, sword, and halberd* one by one translates seem too fragmented. In contrast, as shown in Translation 1, combining them into a single, more general collective word *weapons* more directly conveys the meaning of the original idiom.

While in Translation 2, the translator did not follow the original order of listing the three commonly used ancient Chinese weapons, and there is a weapon, “arrow”, which is not even present in the source text. I speculate that the translator aimed to give readers an impression of a variety of ancient Chinese weapons. However, this solution inevitably leads to some mistranslation, including omissions (leaving out certain weapons) and additions (introducing weapons that do not present in the source text). I believe that translating the term *weapons* as done in Translation 1 would effectively meet the requirements of translation without such issues.

(9)

Source text	福	寿	康	宁
Chinese Pinyin	fu	shou	kang	ning
Glosses	happiness	longevity	health	tranquility
Literal translation	happiness, longevity, health, tranquility			
English Translation 1	blessed long life			

English Translation 2	happiness and a long life
-----------------------	---------------------------

This idiom consists of four blessing words, 福寿康宁 *fu shou kang ning*, which represent “happiness”, “longevity”, “health”, “tranquility”, respectively, and these words have their unique meanings in the Chinese language. However, a literal translation of each of these words into English may not fully capture their deep meanings and the expressions of good fortune and well-being rooted in Chinese culture and tradition.

Therefore, using the abridged translation can generalize the four characters 福寿康宁 *fu shou kang ning* into a more relatable English context to better convey the meaning of the original text. Translation 1 *blessed long life* not only contains the meanings of “happiness”, “longevity”, “health”, “tranquility”, but also more directly expresses the good fortune and well-being implied by these words – wishing people a happy, long, healthy, and peaceful life. While in Translation 2, the translator employed a similar solution as in the previous example, translating only “福 *fu*” as “happiness” and “寿 *shou*” as “long life”, while omitting the last two blessings, “康 *kang*” (health) and “宁 *ning*” (tranquility). If the intention were to make the text more concise, it would have been more appropriate to use abridged translation.

Therefore, while retaining the meaning of the original text, abridged translation brings the translation closer to the linguistic environment and cultural background of the target language through concise and clear expression, and improves the readability and comprehensibility of the translation.

5.5.4. Borrowing translation

The solution of borrowing translation mentioned by Wang and Wang (2013) refers to the fact that in Chinese and English, there are identical or similar idioms with different forms and different words, but which express the same metaphor and cultural information; in this case, the translator can use the solution of borrowing translation to translate such idioms. In my opinion, “borrowing translation” as the name of this solution mentioned by Wang and Wang (2013), is an appropriate term. However, it is more of a cultural correspondence, in which different words with the same metaphor as those in the original text are shown in the translation

to achieve the same cultural purpose and convey the same connotative meaning and cultural message.

(10)

Source text	肝	肠	痛	断
Chinese Pinyin	gan	chang	tong	duan
Glosses	liver	intestine	hurt	broken
Literal translation	terribly pained in one's liver and intestine			
English Translation 1	terribly pained in my heart			
English Translation 2	I am faint thinking of ...			

The idiom 肝肠痛断 *gan chang tong duan* is usually used to describe extreme inner pain and sorrow, and refers more to the pain and suffering of the heart than to the pain in one's liver and intestine. The literal translation, which translates as “terribly pained in one's liver and intestine”, retains the meaning of the original idiomatic expression. However, to the English reader, it may seem complicated and unintelligible, making the reader think that the protagonist is really in physical pain, because there is no similar expression in English.

In this example, Translation 1 employed borrowing translation as a solution, as the literal translation would carry little meaning. Additionally, an equivalent expression that corresponds to the original text can be found in English culture. In this case, the translator found a more commonly used expression in the English context to convey the emotion and meaning of the original text, corresponding “pain in heart” with “pain in liver and intestine”. Translating the idiom as *terribly pained in my heart* brings it closer to the context and understanding of English, and can better tell the sadness and pain expressed by the idiom. In cases where words with different meanings across cultures can find corresponding equivalents, by using borrowing translation as a translation solution, the translator can ensure that the translated text is more easily understood and accepted in the target language environment. At the same time the translation can better convey the emotions that the speaker want to express and the meanings of the original idiomatic expression, and improve the quality and effect of the translation.

This example was also discussed in the “body parts expressions” section, where I referred to the solution as “cultural correspondence”. Borrowing and cultural correspondence are closely related in that both seek to retain elements of the source culture in translation. Here, borrowing translation (cultural correspondence) is an appropriate solution, as it aligns the body parts in both languages, helping readers better understand the source text. However, Scott’s translation did not use this solution. Instead, he omitted the reference to body parts and added “faint” before “thinking of my old mother”, emphasizing a state of weakness and dizziness. While this solution is acceptable, I believe cultural correspondence would have been more suitable.

(11)

Source text	愁	锁	眉	间
Chinese Pinyin	chou	suo	mei	jian
Glosses	worry	lock	brow	adv.
Literal translation	the brows furrowed with sorrows			
English Translation 1	wearing a sorrowful face			
English Translation 2	his cares			

In this passage, the idiom 愁锁眉间 *chou suo mei jian* describes a person whose brows are furrowed with sorrows, suggesting inner trouble and unease. A literal translation, as *the brows furrowed with sorrows*, may convey the meaning of the original idiomatic expression, but in English, such an expression may seem too descriptive and not direct enough. The translators in Translation 1, using the borrowing translation solution, take into account the idioms and conventions of the target language and choose a way of expression that is more in line with spoken and commonly understood English. *Wearing a sorrowful face* is an expression that directly conveys the emotional state depicted by the idiom, i.e., the sadness and pain caused by sorrow. In other words, for two terms from different cultural backgrounds that have corresponding equivalents, the borrowing translation solution can be effectively applied.

(12)

Source text	事	不	过	三
Chinese Pinyin	shi	bu	guo	san

Glosses	thing	no	over	three
Literal translation	it won't happen more than the third time			
English Translation 1	the third time is the charm			
English Translation 2	third time lucky			

This example occurs when the Princess and her uncles are simulating a scene in which they are trying to save Yang Silang by pleading with their mother. They assume that her mother ignored her pleading the first and the second time, so her uncle says *third time's the charm*, where this idiom means that if something has been done twice, the third time will be successful. In English, there is also the expression as “third time's the charm or third time lucky”. Therefore, the use of borrowing translation, or in other words, corresponding idioms, is a good way to convey the meaning.

It is worth mentioning that there is a difference in the meaning of 事不过三 *shi bu guo san*, which we usually use in Chinese in our daily life, because this phrase can represent both positive and negative meanings. The negative meaning is more commonly used in Chinese. The positive meaning is “the third time will be the charm” as shown above, while the negative meaning is that “you should not do the same thing three times in a row” or “you should not make the same mistake three times in a row”. Therefore, when we translate, we need to understand the meaning in context. If the meaning is negative, the solution of literal translation can be used. However, we can also choose the solution of borrowing translation, because there are similar proverbs in English, such as the baseball term *three strikes and you're out*.

In addition to the above analysis of examples where translation solutions are used, we need to consider one more fact. Translation 1 is an official translation by a group of Chinese translators (non-native speakers of English). We can see through these examples that Chinese idioms, due to their unique cultural connotations, expressions, and linguistic structures, often cannot be accurately translated into English by simply translating their literal meanings. This is because the differences between Chinese and English cultures lead to semantic gaps, and idioms themselves have fixed collocations and are context-dependent.

There are also a few examples of Chinese idioms that are still idioms after being translated into English, such as Example 12, 事不过三 *shi bu guo san*. There are also several options available when translating some idioms; even in this case of literal translation, for example, 泪流满面 *lei liu man mian*, lit, tear low full face, which is translated in Translation 1 as *tears stream down my face*, there are two or more translation alternatives, for example, “tears run down my face”, and “tears roll down my face”, while Translation 1 chose to use “stream down”. If we consider the singing voice used for Xiqu, Chinese Xiqu has more /a/ and /i/ pronunciation, so the word “stream” is more favorable to the pronunciation of Xiqu singing. But if we just consider the translation of the written text, I think all these methods are appropriate to use.

5.6. Conclusion

Xiqu language is a form of traditional Chinese art language characterized by its conciseness. A typical example of this conciseness in Chinese is the four-character idiom, which is known for its brevity, rich meaning, fixed word count, and standardized expression. This chapter applies the categories proposed by Wang and Wang (2013) to analyze idiom translation in a Xiqu text, examining solutions for translating idioms within the Xiqu genre. After analyzing various idiom examples in a specific Xiqu text, it was found that the four types of translation solutions can be employed for idiom translation in Xiqu and in general.

1) Literal translation. When the four-character idiom in Chinese has no implied meaning, and its literal meaning directly conveys its intended message, literal translation can be used. This solution applies to idioms that have identical expressions in both Chinese and English, where literal translation can directly correspond to the expressions in both languages, or in cases where a literal translation alone allows the reader to comprehend the meaning of the text. For example, 泪流满面 *lei liu man mian*, literal translation: tears stream down my face. If we consider Pym’s translation solution, this corresponds to *cruise mode*, where no special translation skills are required, and a literal translation is sufficient.

2) Free translation. This solution is generally employed in situations where literal translation fails to achieve the objective of conveying the original meaning to the reader, as well as in cases where literal translation does not align with the linguistic conventions of the target language,

then free translation can try to serve as a solution to assist readers in comprehending the content of the original text. Suppose we refer to Pym's translation solution types. In that case, this solution leans more toward Pym's *explicitation*, because both free translation and explicitation aim to reveal the idiom's true meaning or hidden significance to help readers understand the original content. For example, 琵琶别弹 *pi pa bie tan* lit. play another pipa (instrument), which can be explicated as "falling in love with someone else". This solution is used more frequently than literal translation in the corpus I chose.

3) Abridged translation. Chinese four-character idioms often combine two-word groups or four characters for rhythmic purposes, but the meanings are essentially the same. In such cases, abridged translation is necessary. This refers to the translation solution used to make the translation more concise and clearer when multiple words are used to convey the same meaning in an idiom. This is quite similar to *generalization*, as both involve summarizing the meanings of words and distilling them into a general concept. For example, 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang jian ji*, lit.: knife, spear, sword, and halberd, can be translated as "weapons", 隐姓瞒名 *yin xing man ming*, lit. hide surname and name, abridged translation: take an alias. In my corpus of Chinese Xiqu idioms, this translation solution is the most commonly used; some 30 idioms appear in my corpus, 10 of which use abridged translation, because idioms using two or more different expressions to express the same meaning in one idiom can make the Chinese lyrics of the Xiqu more rhyming.

4) Borrowing translation. This solution is often applied in cases where the expressions differ between Chinese and English, but the cultural concepts they convey are comparable. This is essentially a form of *cultural correspondence* regarding Pym's translation solution type, more specifically, *corresponding idioms*. When some idioms are universal across languages, and their inherent meaning is the same even though the expressions may differ, the ideal situation to apply will be cultural correspondence. For example, the culturally equivalent idiom for 掌上明珠 *zhang shang ming zhu*, lit. a bright pearl in the palm in English, is *the apple of one's eye*.

Cruise mode (no special solutions are needed)

Expression change	Density change	Explicitation	When a literal translation of the four-character idiom does not make sense and the actual extended meaning needs to be translated
		Generalization	When the meaning of each character or each phrase in the four-character idiom is the same or similar
	Cultural correspondence	Corresponding idioms	When there is an appropriate equivalent idiom in both Chinese and English

Table 7. Translation solutions of four-character idioms in Xiqu

Chapter Six: Case Study--Translation of Xiqu Subtitles

6.1. Introduction

During overseas performances, Xiqu typically utilizes original Chinese texts to preserve the original essence of the Chinese lyrics, coupled with English subtitles to help the audience understand 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 subtitles and surtitles is that unlike subtitles fixed on the screen, surtitles are displayed separately from the visual media and can be positioned for optimal viewing²⁸. I use subtitles in this chapter, but not surtitles, because the 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 chapter 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 examine 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. However, it should also take into account the limitations of space and time, that is to say, the translator should have a

²⁸ <https://www.captitles.com/library/what-is-the-difference-between-subtitles-and-surtitles> (accessed 14 November 2024)

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 is essential to note that Xiqu, on the one hand, and film and television series on the other, are two different performance modes. Film and television series 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 simply 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 chapter, firstly, I will review the literature on subtitle translation; secondly, I will introduce the theoretical background of the topic; and then, a detailed analysis of the problems in Xiqu subtitle translation will be presented through selected examples, followed by an assessment of the findings.

6.2. Literature review

Low (2002) argued 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 chapter, 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 argued 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 proposed 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, among others. Many researchers have studied such kinds of translation strategies of subtitle translation (Ma 1997, Sánchez 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) took 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 argued that the subtitle translation of film and television dramas is instantaneous, colloquial and comprehensive. She proposed, 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, to enable audiences to appreciate the different cultural customs based on their understanding of the plot.

Chai et al. (2022) analyzed how to translate subtitles from Chinese to English in cultural film and television dramas using some subtitling techniques of Tomaszekiewicz (2010). They argued 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 found that the most appropriate translation solutions in subtitling are omission, direct transfer, equivalence, and adaptation. They believed that these translation solutions can also be applied in the subtitle translation of other similar film and television dramas.

Zhang et al. (2023) took 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 believed 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.

6.3. Theoretical framework

Delabastita (1990) proposed an analytical model for multimodal inter-semiotic shifts. 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, described his model as comprising five shifts: *repetitio*, *adiectio*, *detractio*, *transmutatio*, and *substitutio*. The model of Delabastita is summarized in Table 8.

Semiotic shift	Description
<i>Repetitio</i>	The film has been reproduced with all of its original material features
<i>Adiectio</i>	The sign is reproduced with a certain addition, new images, sounds, dialogue, or spoken comments have been introduced
<i>Detractio</i>	The reproduction is incomplete, it implies a reduction (cuts)

<i>Transmutatio</i>	The components of the sign are repeated in a somewhat different internal order, there being an alteration of the sign's textual relations
<i>Substitutio</i>	The sign is replaced with an altogether different sign

Table 8. 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 may not be easily understandable to readers. Some translation researchers have chosen to change his terms with English equivalents, like Qian and Feng (2021).

Qian and Feng (2021) believed 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 (see Table 9). They utilized a Chinese costume drama as their corpus and analyzed the translation from Chinese lines to English subtitles. They argued 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 categorized *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 needs to be considered. Qian and Feng overlooked this operation for this 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 are

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 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 9. 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 similarities with the translation of traditional Chinese Xiqu (both ancient Chinese drama and Xiqu involve culturally loaded 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, accordingly, this study adopts the framework developed by 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 shifts cannot be used. For example, they used a term like *Typographic transformation*, which is not suitable to use in Xiqu subtitles, because italicizing 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 based on 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 loaded words and expressions 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 (5) later on, 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 is captured in Table 10.²⁹ I changed the class name from “intersemiotic shift” to “solutions”. This is because I aim to present 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 Omitting repetition and adding punctuation marks to transmit the meanings contained in the repetition in source text
Cultural correspondence	Replacing culture specific expressions with a more common meaning
Perspective change	Changing semantic focus: Enhancing/weakening the tone by changing semantic focus or reducing comprehension bias

Table 10. An adjusted model of Qian and Feng's (2021) for Xiqu subtitle translation

6.4. Corpus

²⁹ In my revision, I add some solutions with using of Pym's (2016a) terminology, for example cultural correspondence, perspective change etc., which are Pym's translation solutions.

In the examples, *Silang Visits His Mother* and its script translation (Sun 2012), and its English subtitle in the performance in a video³⁰ will be used as the corpus. “Source text” in this Chapter means the source text of the Xiqu (Sun 2012), “Translation” means translated text in the script officially published (Sun 2012), and “Subtitle” means the English subtitle in the performance in the video. Therefore, neither Translation nor Subtitle are my translations, they are from the corpus I chose to analyze. For the performance, the actors perform in Chinese, and the official translated text 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 provide my solution as “my solution”. In the following case analyses, I will take some examples already examined in previous chapters to examine whether there are differences in the subtitle translations of the same modal particles, body parts, and four-character idioms. After that, I will also select some content that typically poses challenges for subtitle translation—such as long sentences and sentences containing untranslatable words—for further analysis.

6.5. Example analysis

(1) Example 1 of MP 啊 (a)

Source text	你	倒	是	杨	什	么	呀	?
Chinese Pinyin	ni	dao	shi	yang	shen	me	A (YA)	
Glosses	2sg	finally	be	Yang (surname)	what		Ø	
Translation	Yang who?							
Subtitle	Yang what?							

Based on the analysis of Example 1 in Chapter 3 on Modal Particles, the MP “啊” (a) in this sentence functions to emphasize and soften the tone. In this case, the phrase “Yang who?” in the translation and “Yang what?” in the subtitle convey essentially the same core meaning, using the same translation solution—**omission**. Therefore, there is no significant pragmatic

³⁰ I found a performance excerpt of *Silang Visits Him Mother* online with English subtitles, and the subtitle corpus in this study is from that. See: <https://b23.tv/RGx13df> (accessed 14 November 2024)

difference between these two translations, and both can effectively convey an emphatic tone that reflects the basic mood function of the original sentence.

(2) Example 2 of MP 啊 (a)

Source text	怎	么	样	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	zen	me	yang	A	
Glosses	how			Ø	
Translation	Then what?				
Subtitle	Then?				

In the example analysis in the chapter on MPs, it was mentioned that the function of 啊 (a) in the original text is to emphasize the speaker's eager tone while softening it at the same time. It conveys a gentle questioning tone and highlights that the speaker is waiting for a response. Adding "then" achieves this effect. The previous analysis also noted that simply using "then" can fulfill the function of the MP 啊 (a) and is consistent with natural speech habits. Therefore, in this subtitle translation, the translation adopts a more concise approach by using only one word to prompt the other party to continue speaking, which also achieves the intended effect. However, here, because the subtitle translation adds "then" but omits the remaining part, based on the subtitle translation solution I just discussed, it uses a combination of **omission** and **addition**.

(3) Example 3 of body-part expression

Source text	思	老	母	不	由	人	把	肝	肠	痛	断
Chinese Pinyin	si	lao	mu	bu	you	ren	ba	gan	chang	tong	duan
Glosses	miss	old	mother	can't help		person	BA	liver	intestine	hurt	broken
Translation	Missing my mother, I am terribly pained in my heart.										
Subtitle	I'm missing her as if my heart's torn apart.										

This example relates to the translation of body parts discussed in Chapter Four. The translation solution used in the Xiqu script translation is **cultural correspondence**, because in Chinese it

is common to describe someone being extremely sorrowful with the phrase “肝肠痛 gan chang tong” (literally “liver and intestines pain”), whereas in English, heartache is often used to express a similar feeling. In the subtitle translation, apart from the shorter length compared to the script translation, there is no significant change; the subtitle translation also employs **cultural correspondence** by using “pained in one’s heart” to render the original “liver and intestine hurt”.

(4) Example 4 of body-part expression & four-character idiom

Source text	怎	奈	他	终	日	里	愁	锁	眉	间
Chinese Pinyin	zen	nai	ta	zhong	ri	li	chou	suo	mei	jian
Glosses	how		3sg	all day long			worry	lock	brow	adv.
Translation	What shall I do when he is wearing a sorrowful face all day?									
Subtitle	But he’s been sad all these days.									

The example “愁锁眉间 chou suo mei jian” not only contains a “body part” but is also a four-character idiom. In the script translation, the solution of **cultural correspondence** is used, where “眉 mei” (eyebrows) is corresponded to “face”, resulting in the translation “wear a sorrowful face”. In the subtitle translation, **free translation** is employed by omitting the body part and directly translating the implicit meaning. This solution may make the subtitle translation clearer and easier to understand. However, I believe that **cultural correspondence** can also be applied in subtitle translation, as illustrated by Example 7 in this chapter.

(5) Example 3 of four-character idiom

Source text	刀	枪	剑	戟	似	麻	林
Chinese Pinyin	dao	qiang	jian	ji	si	ma	lin
Glosses	knife	spear	sword	halberd	as	dense	forest
Translation	Their weapons are thick like trees in the forest.						
Subtitle	Their weapons stand like a forest.						

In this example, the phrase “刀枪剑戟 dao qiang jian ji” is a four-character idiom. The script translation uses Pym’s **generalization**, translating the four types of weapons collectively as “weapons”. We can see that the subtitle translation still employs this solution.

Since the examples analyzed in the previous chapters can all be regarded as culturally loaded words and expressions, these examples show that the translation of specific vocabulary and expressions in subtitle translation can still use similar solutions without significant changes. However, these focus on the lexical level, while subtitle translation often deals more with sentence-level issues, such as how to handle long sentences in subtitles and how to help the audience understand the meaning quickly within a short time.

Next, I will use my adjusted model of translation solutions for Xiqu subtitle translation based on Qian and Feng (2021) to analyze some other examples from *Silang Visits His Mother*. I chose these examples because they present challenges specific to subtitle translation.

6.5.1. Omission

(1)

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

Glosses line 3	word	dismantle	Muyi (name)	match		
Source text line 4	良	缘				
Chinese Pinyin line 4	liang	yuan				
Glosses line 4	good	destiny				
Translation	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 former name, the name he had before changing it. The source text contains an intricate description of Yang Silang’s name, based on the fact that the Chinese character “杨 Yang” is composed of “木 Mu” and “易 Yi”, the surname “杨 Yang” is broken down in detail into its parts. Even each of these two components (the character “木 Mu” and “易 Yi”) also have meaning themselves. However, 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 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 a previous study, I discussed that omission is a phenomenon where certain elements are omitted, and others are inevitably compensated (Zhu 2023), such as by actor movements, tones, and so on. However, Xiqu subtitle translation presents a special situation. The presentation of the 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 textual details that are largely 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 of the story and has minimal impact on the storyline.

6.5.2. Addition

(2)

Source text	我	有	心	回	营	去	见	母	一	面
Chinese Pinyin	wo	you	xin	hui	ying	qu	jian	mu	yi	mian
Glosses	1sg	have	heart	back	camp	go	see	mother	one	face
Translation	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. Chinese audiences familiar with the story understand that “camp” refers to the enemy camp relative to the Liao country where the princess resides. Yang Silang was originally a general of the Song, but he was captured by the Liao and then he 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 would lack clarity. In both translation and subtitles, “the Song” has been added to enhance clarity, making it “go see her there in the Song encampment”. This addition 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 even 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)

Source text	我	若	探	母	不	回	转
-------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Chinese Pinyin	wo	ruo	tan	mu	bu	hui	zhuan
Glosses	1sg	if	visit	mother	NEG	come	back
Translation	If I don't come back after visiting my mother, then...						
Subtitle	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 a 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. The Translation is also intended to give the reader a better understanding of the unfinished feeling of the expression.

6.5.3. Omission+Addition

(4)

Source text	萧	天	佐	摆	天	门	两	国	交	战
Chinese Pinyin	Xiao	Tianzuo	bai	tian	men	liang	guo	jiao	zhan	
Glosses	name		set	Heaven	Gate	two	country	blend	war	
Translation	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 the two countries. In Xiqu, there are many characters, and the relationships 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 source text, 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 target text of the script remains largely unchanged, offering a faithful translation of the original text. However, such fidelity may hinder the effectiveness of subtitle translation, which often requires condensation and adaptation to enhance readability and comprehension. For the audience, the name of the character Xiao Tianzuo and the intricate concept of the Heaven Gate array may not significantly contribute 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 clarify 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. This can potentially be interpreted as a manifestation of 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 it may be more effective to employ omission alone in this case, 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.

6.5.4. Perspective change: Changing semantic focus

(5)

Source text	无	有	令	箭	怎	过	关
Chinese Pinyin	wu	you	ling	jian	zen	guo	guan
Glosses	NEG	have	Arrow of command		how	pass	border
Translation	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 source text is a rhetorical question sentence, to show Silang profoundly understands that without the arrow of command, crossing the border is impossible. In the Translation, 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. Suppose there is no punctuation here and it is just an interrogative sentence as the Translation shows. In that case, the audience will misunderstand it 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.

6.5.5. Cultural correspondence

(6)

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

(7)

Source text	非	我	这	几	日	愁	眉	不	展
Chinese Pinyin	fei	wo	zhe	ji	ri	chou	mei	bu	zhan
Glosses	NEG	1sg	this	several	day	worry	eyebrow	NEG	relax
Translation	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 愁眉不展 *chou mei bu zhan* (worry eyebrows don’t stretch) appears in both examples, referring to 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 **cultural correspondence** proposed by Pym, 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 referring to 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 source text paints a vivid picture of a person with a frown, while the Translation straightforwardly states their unhappiness. For subtitles, such translations tend to be more straightforward and easily understood.

(7)

Source text	黄	沙	盖	脸	尸	骨	不	全
Chinese Pinyin	huang	sha	gai	lian	shi	gu	bu	quan
Glosses	yellow	sand	cover	face	corpse	bone	NEG	complete
Translation	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 Translation, it is evident that the Translation adopts a highly literal solution, rendering 脸 *lian* (face) as “face”, and 尸骨不全 *shi gu bu quan* (the body remains incomplete) as “dismembered”. However, the subtitles translate 脸 *lian* as “body” and 尸骨不全 *shi gu bu quan* 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 死无全尸 *si wu quan shi* (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 黄沙盖脸 *huang sha gai lian* ('the sand cover by my face') with "my **body** lie in yellow sand", as 黄沙盖脸 *huang sha gai lian* ('the sand cover by my face') does not explicitly convey the presence or absence of life. "My body lie in yellow sand" clearly indicates that the oath-taker is pledging 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.

6.6. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the translation challenges associated with subtitles for traditional Chinese Xiqu, using the source text, translated text, and subtitle translations of *Silang Visits His Mother* as the study object. The aim was 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 solutions used in film subtitle translation can be directly applied to Xiqu subtitle translation. If the existing solutions of film subtitle translation prove unsuitable for Xiqu, this study would, through detailed analysis of specific cases, propose a set of translation solutions tailored to the unique features of Xiqu subtitle translation. This chapter analyzed 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 chapter confirms that the solutions applicable to subtitle translation for film and television dramas are also applicable to Xiqu translation, but some improvement is needed. Qian and Feng's model

was refined in this chapter, and a model suitable for Xiqu subtitle translation was presented, outlined in Table 11.

In general, subtitle translation, unlike script translation, demands concise expressions due to time constraints. While scripts allow for more detail, subtitles must convey essential information within a limited period. Therefore, in subtitle translation, we must streamline the language to ensure that audiences can understand the important content in a short period. 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.

When focusing specifically on the 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 culturally loaded words and expressions, such as Chinese poetry sentences and idioms. As a result, I have used the common solutions proposed by Qian and Feng for film subtitle translation, which have been mentioned above. However, as discussed earlier, subtitle translation of Xiqu still has some parts that differ 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 more precise and more explicitly detailed to correspond with this performance style. In this case, for some culturally loaded words and expressions, we need to use *cultural correspondence* 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.

The proposed solutions are based on Qian and Feng’s (2021) model for subtitle translation, with necessary adaptations to address the distinctive characteristics of Xiqu translation better. The translation solutions are summarized as follows, and since our main contribution of the whole dissertation is identifying a set of translation solutions for script translation, I will not include subtitle translation solutions in the general summary table in the Conclusion.

Solutions	Sub-category
Addition	Adding Punctuation marks Adding addressing terms
Omission	Omitting allusions Omitting names
Omission+Addition	Omitting parts that do not contribute to understanding, and adding parts that aid comprehension.
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 11. Translation solutions of Xiqu subtitles

Chapter Seven: The Application of Other Translation Solutions Proposed by Pym in Xiqu

7.1. Introduction

After conducting case studies in the previous chapters, which analyzed elements such as Modal Particles, body-part terms, and idioms in Xiqu translation, it can be observed that Pym's translation solutions apply to Xiqu translation, however, some solutions may require reevaluation or adaptation to deal with specific translation texts, despite Pym mentioned that his proposed "all solution types can be used to solve all problems" solutions (Pym 2018: 46). However, Pym's translation solutions are diverse—are there other solutions that can also be applied in translation practice? Or are there translation solutions specifically used in Xiqu translation that are not covered by Pym's framework?

This chapter aims to explore whether Pym's pedagogical table of other solution types can also be effectively applied to Xiqu translation and to identify any solutions used in Xiqu translation that are not included in his typology.

7.2. The typology for Xiqu translation

Here, let us revisit Pym's translation solutions once again. There are three main categories for maximum simplification, namely: Copying, Expression Change, and Material Change, and there are other subcategories under these, as shown in Table 1 in Chapter Two.

In this chapter, the table will be discussed in detail, and some examples from Xiqu will be analyzed to illustrate those translation solutions that were not covered in the previous chapters. The corpus for the analyses will remain *Silang Visits His Mother*. The English version adopted by the research is the current official translation of China, which is also the Translation 1 mentioned in the previous chapters.

7.3. Data analysis and discussion

7.3.1. Copying words

Copying is based on the minimal linguistic units that are meaningful when used alone. There are three main linguistic levels involved: phonetics (sounds), the meaning-expressing units (morphemes), and the written form (scripts) (Pym 2016a: 221).

In Xiqu translation, the translation solution of copying sounds is often used, which means that the Chinese pronunciation is copied, and Chinese pinyin letters are used in the English translation directly. As is the case with the orchestra and musical instruments in Xiqu, which are all traditional Chinese folk instruments, the English translations of their names use the solution of copying sounds directly, which represents “transcription” in the broadest sense. For example, *suona* for 唢呐 *suǒ nà*, *sheng* for 笙 *shēng*. Furthermore, the translation of the role type also uses copying sound. *Laosheng* for 老生 *lǎo shēng*, *lao* means aged; it is a role type representing middle-aged and older male figures. And *dan* for 旦 *dàn*, which is a role type depicting female figures of various ages, characters, and statuses.

7.3.2. Copying structure

‘Structure’ here refers to the relations between the expressions in a text, primarily concerning order of presentation (Pym 2016a: 223).

Xiqu always includes some prose sentences because they can make the singing more rhythmic and expressive in performance. To get the same rhythm and to get better equivalents, these prose sentences are translated into English using the solution type of copying sentence (syntactic) structure. See, for example (1).

(1)

我好比笼中鸟有翅难展，

我好比虎离山收了孤单。

Like a bird in the cage, I cannot spread my wings and fly,

Like a tiger leaving the mountain, I am lonely inside.

7.3.3. Perspective Change

Perspective change means one can see the same object from a different angle, for example, active into passive, positive into negative, half-full into half-empty, etc., a directionality being reversed, and indeed all those things being reversed (Pym 2016a: 224).

There are many examples of perspective change in the English translation of this Xiqu. First, in terms of speaking habits, Chinese has more active sentences, while English has more passive sentences, so when translating, the translation solution changing voice is always used, and the active sentences in Chinese are often translated into passive sentences in English, e.g.:

(2)

Source text	金	井	锁	梧	桐
Chinese Pinyin	jin	jing	suo	wu	tong
Glosses	golden	well	lock	parasol tree	
Literal translation	a golden well lock a parasol tree				
English Translation	<i>A parasol tree locked in a golden well.</i>				

In addition, changing semantic focus is often used when translating sentences with the MP 啊 (a). It is because the MP 啊 (a) always appears with a specific function, either to strengthen the tone or to make the language more moderate, etc. There is no such group of MPs in English, so we need to express its function in other ways. For example, the following example uses changing semantic focus.

(3)

Source text	蒂	根	儿	就	蒙	事	啊	!
Chinese Pinyin	di	gen	er	jiu	meng	shi	A	
Glosses	absolutely		that	no	matter	Ø		
Literal meaning	There is nothing wrong at all Ø!							
English translation	It was just a hoax!							

This example illustrates perspective change; it changes the semantic focus from negative to positive. 啊 (a) is used to express that there is definitely nothing wrong at all, and to convey a relaxed and happy tone. It seems that when the semantic focus is positive, it better reflects the positive, relaxed, and happy tone of the speaker.

7.3.4. Density Change

The notion of ‘density’ here minimally concerns how much text is used in order to convey a given set of information. Density change means, for example, that the translation expresses more information in the original text in shorter words, in which case it is an increase in density.

Density change contains many sub-types, such as generalization, specification, explicitation, implicitation, etc. Specific examples can be used to understand the usage of these translation solutions.

(4)

Source text	失	落	番	邦	十	五	年
Chinese Pinyin	shi	luo	fan	bang	shi	wu	nian
Glosses	lost		foreign country		fifteen		year
Literal meaning	stuck in a foreign country for 15 years						
English translation	<i>I've been stuck among the barbarian Liao for fifteen years.</i>						

In this example, the translation adopts the solution of specification. In the original text, the word 番邦 *fan bang*, which means foreign country, is omitted and replaced by “barbarian Liao” in the translation. The “foreign country” is a generalized concept; however, in the English translation, to help the audience or readers better understand the place, the translation uses specification.

(5)

Source text	芍	药	开	牡	丹	放	花	红	一	片
Chinese Pinyin	shao	yao	kai	mu	dan	fang	hua	hong	yi	pian
Glosses	peony		bloom	peony		bloom	flower	red	a(an)	area
Literal meaning	two kinds of peonies are blooming into a large area of red									
English translation	<i>The peonies are blooming into a sea of red.</i>									

This example also uses the translation solution type of density change; it employs generalization from Pym’s translation solution types. Generalization refers to the process of generalizing a specific concept. In this example, it involves generalizing two types of flowers into a single overarching term. This is because Chinese often employs rhetorical techniques such as repetition and parallelism to create rhythmic and melodious language, particularly in Xiqu, where rhyming is frequently used for better oral delivery. However, repeating the same words in English would be redundant. Moreover, in Chinese, flower names can be particular; for instance, 芍药 *shao yao* and 牡丹 *mu dan* are two distinct types of flowers, both belonging to the same category of peonies. The original text describes these two kinds of flowers competing to bloom and showing a flourishing scene. However, both of the two flowers in the original text are “peony” after consulting the English translation, and the target text generalizes the two flowers together, making the translation more concise (see the words in bold).

(6)

Source text line 1	本	宫	,	四	郎	延	辉	,
Chinese Pinyin line 1	ben	gong		si	lang	yan	hui	
Glosses line 1	I			fourth	son	Yanhui (name)		
Source text line 2	乃	山	后	磁	州	人	氏	。
Chinese Pinyin line 2	is	mountain	after	Cizhou (place)		person		
Glosses line 2	nai	shan	hou	ci	zhou	ren	shi	
Literal meaning	I am the fourth son Yanhui, I am from Cizhou beyond the mountains							
English translation	<i>I am Yang Yanhui, the fourth son of the Yang family from Cizhou County beyond the mountains.</i>							

This example is the self-introduction of the main character Yanhui in this Xiqu text. Yanhui (Silang) only introduces his first name in the source text, not his last name, and he only gives

the name of his hometown without specifying its type (whether it is a city, or a province, or a county). Translators mostly use the solution of **explicitation** to make the listener understand the original text more clearly. **Explicitation** is a technique whereby information that is implicit in the source text is made explicit in the target text (Klaudy 1993). In this example, “of Yang family” introduces Yanhui’s surname, giving us some hints about his original family. The same situation occurs for the location of the hometown, and the translation explains that the type of place is a “county”, which provides the overall scene of the situation. In addition, the original three-sentence source text is translated by **joining sentences**, which is mainly because of the feature of “multi-branch-from-one-stem” in English (Lin 1983: 23). This means that in English, as long as it conforms to the syntactic structure, the meaning can often be expressed in one long sentence, especially in formal text, while Chinese semantics, according to speaking habits, is always expressed directly through words, and its modifying components are generally prefixed, and the prefixed space is limited, so it is mainly cut into short sentences³¹.

Joining sentences and **cutting sentences** are the sub-types under **resegmentation** by Pym. Here, I would like to include the sub-types of **resegmentation** under **density change**, which tends to refer to a previous version of Pym’s translation solution types (Pym 2016a), because both joining and cutting sentences of **resegmentation** can be seen as changing text density, which is also pointed out in another paper by Pym et al. (2020: 3).

7.3.5. Compensation

The translation solution type called **compensation** is understood as placing the solution in a new textual position and/or at a new linguistic level (Pym 2016a: 229). It has been included under **density change** as well in Pym et al. (2020).

In the translation of the Chinese Xiqu text, **compensation**, particularly “new place in the text”, is frequently employed. For example, in A.C. Scott’s translation, he incorporates the stage’s musical performance into the text, such as *before the entry of Ssu Lang, the orchestra performs the traditional overture on the brass*. Additionally, subtle actions of the actors, like

³¹ Here, my views differ from Pym et al. (2020), who mentioned that “Chinese sentences tend to string many ideas together, it is quite common to split long Chinese sentences into two or more sentences in English”.

sighs and changes in their gaze, are also depicted, as in *Ssu Lang gives a long drawn-out sigh of anguish; He then weeps, wiping away his tears first with his left hand*. Footnotes are also used to explain specific terms. The Chinese official translation similarly utilizes **compensation**, not only providing extensive background information on the story and characters before the translation of the Xiqu but also describing the actors' entrances and exits on stage, such as *Maid enters ahead of...* and *Maid curtsies to the Prince*.

7.3.6. Text tailoring

Text tailoring is a translation solution under Pym's **material change**. Unlike the aforementioned solutions, where translators aim to use these solutions to express and reproduce the content and culture of the source text, **text tailoring** allows translators to reasonably modify, delete, or add large portions of content to suit the translation purpose. However, for translating Xiqu, this solution is not feasible. Xiqu usually presents a complete story, and making significant changes or additions to the story would result in incoherence. Both readers of the script and audiences who rely on subtitles during performances would become confused about the context, leading to a loss of the performance's impact. I changed "text tailoring" to "text change". Although large-scale cuts are rarely made in Xiqu translation, many minor alterations frequently appear in the text, such as omissions and linguistic amplification. These techniques are commonly used.

In Pym's translation solutions, omission is not included, as he believes omission does not constitute a translation solution. He argues that if an item is omitted, another translation solution must have been used to supplement the omitted content. In Xiqu translation, however, omission is frequently used. For example, in translating modal particles, in certain sentence types, the sentence structure alone is sufficient to express the tone so that the modal particles can be omitted. As for linguistic amplification, we can view it as an addition that aids understanding. Some specific linguistic items can be added to facilitate the reader's comprehension.

(9)

Source text	还	要	叫	咱	家	盟	誓	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	hai	yao	jiao	zan	jia	meng	shi	A	

Glosses	still	want	let	1sg	swear	Ø	
Literal meaning	You want me to make a swear Ø?						
English translation	You want me swear it?						

Here, the speaker uses 啊 (a) to emphasize her surprise, to express that it is unbelievable that her husband wants her to swear to something. The translation is a declarative-form question, which is usually used in informal conversations convey the surprise and a rhetorical tone of the speaker. As the English translation can convey the tone of the speaker, omission can be used here.

Linguistic amplification involves adding certain linguistic elements such as adverbs, clausal phrases, interjections, and so on (Zhu 2022: 223). See the example below:

(10)

Source text	怎	么	样	啊	?
Chinese Pinyin	zen	me	yang	a	
Glosses	how			Ø	
Literal meaning	What will happen Ø?				
English translation	<i>Then what?</i>				

The MP 啊 (a) has various functions; besides emphasizing a specific tone, it also has the function of mitigating the tone. In this example, if we have some knowledge of the text of this Xiqu, it is not difficult to realize that in this example, although the main character, Yanhui (Silang), has a very close relationship with his wife, Princess Tiejing, he married Princess Tiejing by joining her family³², and therefore, even as a man (in ancient China, the status of a man was usually much higher than a woman's) his family status is not very far from his wife's. Therefore, when the two couples talk, they always use the MP 啊 (a) to moderate the tone. This example is of such a situation. The function of 啊 (a) here in the original text is to emphasize the eager tone of the speaker and to soften the tone at the same time. It conveys a gentle questioning tone and emphasizes that the speaker is waiting for the answer. By adding

³² In ancient China, it was normal for a woman to marry into a man's family. Therefore, the situation in this example was unusual in ancient China, and the man in this situation would have been looked down upon.

“Then...” in the translation, the translator wants to express that the speaker is gently waiting for the answer, which makes the target text functionally equivalent to the source text. If this sentence is translated only as “What?”, the attitudinal aspect is lost.

Therefore, I have incorporated linguistic amplification into Pym’s translation solutions because it is frequently used when translating modal particles. Chinese modal particles often require additional vocabulary to convey their nuances in English translation effectively.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter tested whether Pym’s typology can be used as an analytical tool for Xiqu translation and which translation solutions are used in translating Xiqu, and which methods are used but not included in the typology. After testing, English translations of Xiqu can easily correspond to each translation solution type described by Pym. However, there are also translation solution sub-types used that are not included in Pym’s classification, so I suggest adding those solutions. In Xiqu language, repetition of the same phrases or sentences is commonly employed for rhyme or meter, but it can be perceived as redundant in English. Therefore, **generalization** is often used in translation to refine the sentences and meet the requirements of English speech. As Xiqu language primarily consists of dialogue, it encompasses excellent intonation and emotion. Moreover, Xiqu texts often contain references to various body parts to convey emotions and metaphorical meaning. Due to differences in the metaphorical functions and emotional expressions of body-part expressions between English and Chinese, however, **corresponding body parts** are utilized as a translation solution falling within the group of Cultural correspondence, which is the most common translation approach in addressing these differences and conveying emotional grief effectively.

I changed text tailoring to text change because text tailoring is seldom seen or used in Xiqu translation, but text change is frequently used. I have categorized omission and linguistic amplification under text change. Xiqu characters often have strict hierarchical relationships, requiring considerations of appropriate tone in their speech. Therefore, Modal particles play a crucial role in expressing the emotions and tones of characters in Xiqu language. Adding suitable words, often adverbs, helps convey the intended tone and emotions. Thus, **linguistic**

amplification is frequently employed in translating Xiqu language, especially the modal particles. I keep the cruise mode because even in the translation of unique texts, there is the use of regular language techniques that do not need unique translation solutions. Based on the above, I have developed a classification suitable for Xiqu translation, supplementing Pym's system.

There are, of course, other solutions, such as changing sentence focus and cutting sentences, that can be used to deal with the English translation problem in Xiqu, as all of them can be found in Pym's categorization. However, these translation solutions only play a simple role in translating, without demonstrating the uniqueness of Xiqu translation. In other words, these translation solutions are so ordinary that I have chosen not to elaborate on them in this chapter. This classification was fully explained in Pym's previous paper for pedagogical purposes (Pym and Esther 2014). With this chapter, it can be reiterated that this classification can be used as a guideline for translators and is also applicable when translating specific texts like Xiqu.

Based on this and the results of each case study, it shows that Pym's translation solution type can be used in whole Xiqu translation with some minor modifications. I will show the entire table used for Xiqu in the final Conclusion.

Chapter Eight: The application of AI translation techniques for Chinese Xiqu

8.1. Introduction

Known for its poetic language and artistic complexity, Xiqu poses significant challenges for translation, as discussed in the previous chapters. Translating Xiqu is not merely a linguistic task but a cultural and artistic endeavor. In the previous chapter, I established a set of translation solutions for rendering Xiqu texts based on human translators' outputs. Here, I will explore the other side of translation by demonstrating how machine and AI translation approach Xiqu translation. In recent years, machine translation technology has undergone a significant shift from traditional neural machine translation (NMT) systems to generative models based on large language models (LLMs). Traditional NMT systems are trained end-to-end on large-scale bilingual parallel corpora, aiming to generate the most probable target language output for a given source language sentence. These systems are highly deterministic by design and suitable for resource-rich language pairs and specific-domain translation tasks. In contrast, LLM-based generative models (AI models) are pre-trained on massive multilingual corpora in an unsupervised or semi-supervised manner. These models are not specifically designed for translation but "contain" translation capabilities as part of their broader language understanding and generation abilities. Their translation outputs heavily depend on how the input prompts are designed, a process known as prompt engineering. Prompt engineering refers to carefully designing input sentences, instructions, or contexts to guide the model in generating outputs that better meet expectations. Compared with traditional NMT systems, LLM models can produce diverse translation versions based on different prompt strategies, offering greater flexibility and creativity, especially suitable for handling culturally loaded content or low-resource translation contexts. Nowadays, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine translation (MT) have profoundly influenced various fields, including both interpretation and translation. If I provide appropriate prompts guiding them towards handling culturally loaded words and expressions, can AI translation replace human translators? More specifically, how effective are AI and MT in translating specialized texts like Xiqu? Or can they provide meaningful assistance during the translation process? These questions are at the core of the inquiry in this chapter, aiming to assess whether AI-driven translation tools can address the unique demands of Xiqu

translation and contribute to its practice in meaningful ways. This chapter investigates the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) translation techniques for Chinese Xiqu. The research compares the effectiveness of Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) models in capturing the multifaceted nature of Xiqu text.

The study involves training and evaluating both NMT and GPT models on a dataset of Chinese Xiqu libretto paired with high-quality human translations, which serve as the benchmark for comparison and error scoring. The evaluation process goes beyond literal meaning accuracy, employing metrics that assess the models' ability to preserve artistic style, emotional nuances, and cultural references inherent in Xiqu. By comparing the strengths and weaknesses of NMT and GPT models in this unique translation context, the thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing development of AI translation for artistic and culturally specific domains. This chapter aims to explore the possibilities AI and MT might offer for the future development of Xiqu translation, shedding light on how technological advancements could complement human expertise in translating this traditional art form.

8.2. Literature review

8.2.1. The role of generative AI tools in translation studies

Soysal (2023) proposed that translation studies and artificial intelligence share a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship, wherein each can contribute to the advancement of the other. However, the limitations of AI highlight the critical role of human expertise in conjunction with AI. According to Soysal, AI can only partially replace human translation, as its capabilities are insufficient to address the nuanced and context-rich nature of translation tasks fully. On the other hand, translation studies can support the development and refinement of AI for translation purposes, while AI can enhance translation efficiency and accuracy. Soysal emphasized the importance of a collaborative approach, suggesting that human translators should review and refine translations generated by AI to ensure quality and contextual appropriateness.

Li (2024), from the perspective of Chinese culture, examined the impact of GPT on translation and highlighted significant changes. She pointed out that advanced large language models, such as ChatGPT, are widely applied in translation teaching and practice. However,

their use has raised concerns about cultural hegemony. Li argued that large language models trained outside China, like ChatGPT, primarily rely on datasets from Western societies, resulting in systematic cultural biases that affect the accurate translation of Chinese historical and cultural texts.

Similarly, Zhang (2024), drawing on large-scale social survey data, analyzed the application of AI translation and found that its recognition is predominantly in non-literary fields. This suggests that while GPT models may excel in technical or straightforward translations, their suitability in literary and cultural translation requires careful consideration. These findings indicate that GPT for translating culturally rich or literary texts necessitates critical evaluation, especially for preserving cultural integrity and contextual accuracy.

Wang (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of AI translation versus human translation, examining their respective advantages and disadvantages to uncover the impact of AI advancements on the translation industry. The study highlighted the transformative effects of AI's rapid development, demonstrating how these technologies reshape translation practices. The findings revealed that fostering collaboration between humans and AI can enhance translation outcomes, facilitating the delivery of high-quality translations. Wang emphasized the importance of leveraging AI's efficiency and consistency while relying on human expertise to address cultural and contextual nuances, ultimately advocating for a symbiotic relationship between human translators and AI technologies in the evolving landscape of translation.

8.2.2. AI generative tools and translation quality assessment

Awadh (2024) explored the significant impact of AI on the field of translation by using scientific texts as the corpus for his study. He designed a comprehensive test comprising six texts, including collocations, phrasal verbs, and abbreviations, to evaluate and compare the performance and efficiency of 20 Arabic translators and 10 AI applications in translating scientific content. The results indicated that approximately 76% of human translations achieved accuracy, compared to 70% for AI translations. The study further revealed that human translators and AI face similar challenges, primarily concerning vocabulary and cultural differences. Awadh identified "equivalence" as the most commonly employed principle in

scientific text translation. Under the equivalence principle, human translators predominantly used free translation to convey meaning, while AI applications frequently relied on literal translation.

Deng (2024) conducted an experiment demonstrating that ChatGPT outperformed human translators in certain aspects of translation. The study selected four short English texts and compared translations produced by ChatGPT with those produced by a team of Chinese student translators specializing in English. The findings revealed that while ChatGPT and human translators faced challenges maintaining fidelity and fluency, ChatGPT surpassed human translations in these areas. Specifically, ChatGPT exhibited a better understanding of the source text and produced more faithful and fluent translations. Additionally, ChatGPT demonstrated superior language diversity and syntactic complexity compared to human translators.

8.3. Method

In this study, I will utilize four state-of-the-art translation models: DeepL and Youdao (a famous dictionary in China launched by a Chinese Internet company) to represent NMT (Neural Machine Translation) models and ChatGPT-3.5 and Gemini for GPT-based models, both GPT-based models I used are free versions.³³ For the GPT models, I have incorporated a carefully crafted prompt to guide the models in producing more accurate and sophisticated translations. This prompt is designed based on my experience and expertise in Xiqu translation, taking into account the unique characteristics of Xiqu and the potential techniques and guidelines that a skilled Xiqu translator should employ:

“Translate the following opera text into English, prioritizing a natural flow that complements the music and conveys the characters’ emotions powerfully. Adapt cultural references for global audiences and maintain the original text’s syllable count and rhythm, especially for lyrical sections. Translate stage directions clearly and

³³ It is worth noting that by 2025, DeepSeek—a Chinese-developed large language model—has been introduced and studied. Demonstrating superior performance to ChatGPT in handling culture-specific expressions, DeepSeek represents a significant development in AI-assisted translation. In future research, I intend to examine and compare the performance of DeepSeek and ChatGPT in translating Chinese cultural texts, particularly within the genre of Xiqu.

consider using figurative language to enhance the beauty of the text. Finally, proofread the translation for a natural, singable flow.”

A total of 14 excerpts were selected based on the following criteria: cohesion and coherence, literary devices, punctuation, grammar, and cultural references. To evaluate the quality of the translations generated by the NMT and GPT models, I adopted the American Translators Association’s (ATA) five-rubric Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) system. The TQA model evaluates translations based on five core dimensions, as shown in Table 12. The assessment uses a penalty-based scoring system, where one penalty point indicates a slight deviation from the expected outcome, two penalty points represent a moderate deviation, and so on. The output was evaluated solely by me.

Quantitatively, I penalize points for each type of error: 1 point for minor errors and 2 points for major errors. Qualitatively, I define “minor errors” as issues that do not seriously hinder comprehension or artistic integrity, whereas “major errors” are defined as defects that significantly obstruct understanding or distort the original text. For example, in Category 1 (source text meaning), each clear mistranslation was penalized with -1, so three errors would result in -3. In Category 2 (target text style and cohesion), -1 was given for an inappropriate overall style, -1 was given for the inequivalent rhyme, and another -1 for cohesion problems in specific parts. For Category 3 (situational appropriateness), I mainly considered whether the translation successfully conveyed the social and cultural functions of Xiqu. If not, -1 was given. Category 4 (grammar and mechanics) followed a -1 per error approach. In Category 5 (translation skill), I checked whether the translation adopted a suitable solution (e.g., in translating body part expressions). Failure to apply the appropriate solution resulted in -1.

Category	description
Category 1 Source Text Meaning	A measure of the extent to which the candidate’s response (the target text) reflects or fails to reflect an adequate understanding of the themes and rhetoric of the source text.

Category 2 Target Text Style and Cohesion	The candidate's knowledge of the ways in which texts are linked and organized into documents in the given target language genre, or document type within a given communicative setting.
Category 3 Situational Appropriateness	A measure of the candidate's ability to employ the functional and socio-cultural aspects of the target language in their translation.
Category 4 Grammar and Mechanics	The category which includes spelling, diacritical marks, agreement, punctuation, and other conventions of the writing and grammar of the target language. It addresses linguistic competence in the target language.
Category 5 Translation skill	The application of strategies to translation problems and the use of resource materials. This category is measured by how well the target text reflects the identification of translation problems and successful solutions to them. It also includes the degree of success or failure in the appropriate use of references in overcoming gaps in language or topic knowledge.

Table 12. Criteria of evaluation (Angelelli 2009: 42–43)

This criteria allows for a comprehensive and objective evaluation of the translations, considering both the accuracy of the translation and how well it adheres to the stylistic and cultural nuances of the original text. It is thus suitable for evaluating Xiqu translation.

8.4. Corpus

The corpus I chose for analysis is the Chinese Xiqu *Silang Visits His Mother*. The excerpts of my source Chinese text are taken from this Xiqu, and the excerpts I chose are those with complex linguistic structures and cultural connotations that are difficult to translate.

In this chapter, the translation I have adopted is the Translation 1 I mentioned in previous chapters, which is an official version produced by Renmin University of China and Beijing

Foreign Languages University, who leveraged their respective strengths by inviting dozens of domestic and foreign scholars and experts in theater theory, Jingju performance artists, and English linguists.

8.5. Results and discussion

I will analyze five excerpts here, which will be the most representative and rich in many issues. The first example relates to the MP discussed in Chapter Three: can AI translation accurately convey the functions of particles? The second example includes body part words and expressions discussed in Chapter Four, while the third example involves idioms covered in Chapter Five. I will compare AI translations with human translations to see whether AI can also effectively transmit the cultural connotations. The fourth example concerns the translation of parallel sentences in Xiqu, and the fifth example focuses on the translation of culturally rich costumes and props unique to Xiqu. These will involve considerations of cohesion, coherence, literary devices, punctuation, grammar, and cultural references. For the specific issues (e.g., idioms, body part words and expressions) that arise in these four paragraphs—cases analyzed in detail in previous chapters—I will describe the machine/AI translation outputs using the standardized terminology I have proposed. This will allow me to examine the translation solutions adopted by machine/AI translation in Xiqu translation. I will then compare human translation results with machine/AI translation results to determine whether the same translation solutions were employed for the same examples. If discrepancies arise, I will assess which solution yields better results. Based on these findings, I will provide recommendations for the future translation of traditional cultural texts.

Excerpts 1

I chose this excerpt because it contains two MPs. The Chinese particles here carry emotional and cultural connotations. As I discussed in Chapter Three, how to translate MPs in Xiqu is important. Can AI translation also effectively convey these cultural meanings?

Source text:

您二位给我出个主意吧

得得得，我给您出个主意啊

我先问问您

想当初这个盗令出关的时候您那个主意，他打哪来的呢

当初盗令啊

Translation text:

NMTs	DeepL	I'll give you an idea. Yes, I'll give you an idea. Let me ask you Where did you get the idea of stealing the order when it came out? When he stole the order.
	Youdao	You two, give me an idea, please. All right, all right, I'll give you an idea. Let me ask you first. Back then, when that thief left the pass, where did your idea come from? It was the theft of the imperial edict back then.
GPTs	ChatGPT	Could you two give me an idea? All right, all right, I'll give you an idea. But first, let me ask you something. Back when that forged order was smuggled out of the pass, where did <i>that</i> idea of yours come from? Ah, the forged order back then...
	ChatGPT with prompt	Could you two lend me your wisdom now? All right, all right — here's a thought for you. But first, let me ask you this — When that forged command slipped past the gates, Tell me — where'd <i>your</i> grand idea come from back then? Ah, the forged command... back in the day...

	Gemini	You two, give me an idea. Alright, alright, I'll give you an idea. Let me ask you first, When that stolen decree was taken out of the pass back then, where did your idea for that come from? That stolen decree back then...
	Gemini with prompt	Give me your counsel, you two, I beg! Ah, yes, yes, yes, I'll offer counsel now! But first, a question I must pose... That stolen decree, when it left the pass, back in those days... Your grand scheme then, from where did it arise? The stolen decree, back then, ah..
Human translation		You two please help me to think of something! Fine, fine. I have an idea for you Let me ask you first How did you come up with the idea for stealing the arrow of command? Stealing the arrow of command?

Table 13. Translations of Excerpt 1 (retrieved: July 2025)

The target texts (TTs) generated by DeepL mainly had issues with Category 1, resulting in a 5-point penalty. First, the source text 您二位给我出个主意吧 *nin er wei gei wo chu ge zhu yi ba* (you two please give me some idea) was mistranslated as “I’ll give you an idea”, which is a significant misunderstanding and thus penalized 2 points. Additionally, the term 盗令 *dao ling* was inaccurately translated; 令 *ling* here does not mean “command” but refers to a pass token, specifically an “arrow of command”. Lastly, the sentence 当初盗令啊 *dang chu dao ling a* is a rhetorical question, but it was mistranslated, incurring another 2-point penalty. Regarding Category 5, concerning translation skills, DeepL failed to employ the appropriate translation skill for the MP 啊 (a), and the functions of the two occurrences of 啊 (a) were not emphasized, resulting in a 2-point penalty.

Youdao’s translation was penalized 4 points in Category 1. Although the overall translation roughly conveyed the original meaning, the phrase “thief left the pass” misrepresents the Chinese term 盗令 *dao ling*. Here, 盗令 *dao ling* refers to stealing the command arrow, not a

“thief” as a person. Additionally, there was a 1-point penalty in Category 3 because the first sentence is the princess seeking advice, which should express an eager but polite tone. However, Youdao’s translation sounds like a firm command, failing to meet the socio-cultural function of the original. Finally, in Category 5, the translation technique for the particle 啊 (a) was not well implemented.

ChatGPT and Prompted ChatGPT translations received the fewest penalties in this group. Firstly, both models lost 2 points in Category 1 because the source text’s 盗令 *dao ling* refers to the theft of the real “command arrow”, but the source text only mentions “stealing” and does not specify “forging”. Both models translated it as “forged order” and “forged command”. In Category 5, regarding translation skills, the particle 啊 (a) in 我给您出个主意啊 *wo gei nin chu ge zhu yi a* was not emphatically highlighted for its cultural function. Aside from that, both models performed well. Although the particle 啊 (a) in the last sentence of both models’ translations did not create a rhetorical question with emphasis as the official translation did, the addition of the interjection “Ah” made the translations more equivalent to the source text and effectively emphasized the final 啊 (a).

Gemini and Gemini with prompt both treated 盗令 *dao ling* as a verb meaning “to steal the command arrow”, but both models translated it as “stolen decree” each time it appeared, resulting in a 2-point penalty in Category 1. In Category 3, each model was penalized 1 point. Because the source text 您二位给我出个主意吧 *nin er wei gei wo chu ge zhu yi ba* is a mild and humble request, however, both translations rendered it as a strong imperative command, failing to meet the functional and socio-cultural aspects. Regarding Category 5, the translation skills, both models did not effectively highlight the emphatic and softening functions of the particle 啊 (a), resulting in penalties of 2 points and 1 point, respectively.

Criteria	DeepL	Youdao	ChatGPT	ChatGPT with prompt	Gemini	Gemini with prompt
Category 1	-5	-4	-2	-2	-2	-2
Category 2	0	-1	0	0	0	0

Category 3	0	-1	0	0	-2	-2
Category 4	-1	0	0	0	0	0
Category 5	-2	-2	-1	-1	-2	-1
Total	-8	-8	-3	-3	-6	-5

Table 14. Overall penalty scores for Excerpt 1

As mentioned earlier, this example contains two MPs 啊 (a), appearing in the second sentence 我给您出个主意啊 *wo gei nin chu ge zhu yi a* and the fifth sentence 当初盗令啊 *dao chu dao ling a*. According to the analysis of the MP 啊 (a) in this dissertation, we first need to understand the functions of these two 啊 (a). The function of the 啊 (a) in the second sentence is to remind or call for attention. The 啊 (a) in the fifth sentence in the source text carries a rhetorical tone with an emphatic meaning. Based on the analysis in Chapter Three, the most appropriate translation solutions for these two cases are: for the second sentence, linguistic amplification—adding a word like “listen” can better attract the listener’s attention; for the fifth sentence, it can be translated as a rhetorical question, so that even if the MP is omitted, the emphasis can still be conveyed.

Overall, in this example, both machine translation and AI translation show shortcomings when compared to human translation.

Excerpt 2

This excerpt was selected as an example because it features two expressions involving body parts. Metaphors based on body parts constitute an important area in linguistic studies. It is essential to examine whether the body part expressions in the English translation correspond accurately to those in the original text and successfully transmit the intended deeper meanings.

Source text:

非是我这几日愁眉不展

有一桩心腹事不敢明言

萧天佐摆天门两国交战

我的娘押粮草来到北番

Translation text:

NMTs	DeepL	<p>It's not that I've been so worried these days.</p> <p>There's something on my mind that I don't dare to tell you.</p> <p>Xiao Tianzuo has set up a war with Tianmen</p> <p>My mother came to Beifan with provisions</p>
	Youdao	<p>It's not that I am so sad these days</p> <p>There's one thing I don't want to talk about</p> <p>Xiao Tianzuo put the gate of the two countries at war</p> <p>My mother brought food to the North</p>
GPTs	ChatGPT	<p>It's not that I've been furrowing my brows these days,</p> <p>There's a matter close to my heart that I dare not speak of openly.</p> <p>Xiao Tianzuo set up Tianmen, two countries are at war,</p> <p>My mother is delivering grain to the Northern Barbarians.</p>
	ChatGPT with prompt	<p>It's not merely these days I wear a troubled brow,</p> <p>A matter close to my heart, yet I dare not avow.</p> <p>Xiao Tianzuo guards Tianmen, two nations clash in strife,</p> <p>My mother, escorting provisions, journeys to the northern wilds of life.</p>
	Gemini	<p>Not that I've been frowning these past few days,</p> <p>But a secret burden weighs on my heart, untold.</p>

		<p>Xiao Tianzuo has set up camp at Tianmen, war brewing between the two nations,</p> <p>And my mother has ventured into the northern territories, transporting provisions.</p>
	<p>Gemini with prompt</p>	<p>No furrowed brow these days betrays my plight, A hidden weight upon my heart takes flight.</p> <p>War drums resound, Xiao Tiansuo takes the field, Two nations clash, their destinies revealed.</p> <p>But deeper sorrow, a silent, gnawing pain, A mother's journey, braving battle's strain.</p> <p>With courage bold, she ventures north afar, Grain for the troops, a beacon like a star.</p>
<p>Human translation</p>		<p>It's not just that I'm feeling sorrowful these days But that there is one thing I dared tell you not: Xiao Tianzuo has deployed his Heaven Gate array and war between our two countries is eminent My mother came north with grains and fodder</p>

Table 15. Translations of Excerpt 2 (retrieved: May 2024)

The target text of this paragraph, translated by DeepL, has a meaning in Category 1 that has not been translated. The term 北番 *bei fan* refers to the northern Khitan³⁴ tribe and the Liao state they built, and the term “番 *fan*” used to mean foreign country or foreign ethnic group. DeepL translates this term phonetically without any explanation, which will make it difficult

³⁴ The Khitan people were a historical nomadic people from Northeast Asia who, from the 4th century, inhabited an area corresponding to parts of modern Mongolia, Northeast China, and the Russian Far East. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khitan_people)

for the readers to understand. In my opinion, for cultural words, phonetic translation is a good way to retain the original cultural flavor, but it needs to be accompanied by annotations; otherwise, it will be difficult for people to understand. In addition, in Category 3, the problem of inconsistent punctuation also occurs.

The text translated by Youdao is also not well translated in Category 1; for example, the word “敢 gan” (dare) in the phrase 不敢明言 *bu gan ming yan* (dare not speak plainly) is not emphasized but translated as “want to”. The two words “敢 gan” (dare) and “想 xiang” (want) are different. According to the meaning of the original text and the context, the speaker’s intended meaning is ‘lacks the courage to’, not ‘lacks the desire to’. In addition, two Chinese cultural terms, 摆天门 *bai tian men* (set Tianmen array) and 北番 *bei fan* (northern/foreign country), have not been translated. The previous paragraph has already explained what “北番 *bei fan*”(northern/foreign country) means, while “天门 *tian men*” is a kind of array. Youdao not only failed to translate “array” but instead described it as a “gate”, which shows that it is difficult for NMTs to translate such culturally loaded words and expressions accurately. Another problem also occurs in category 5. Youdao’s translation lacks translation skill; for example, when translating body parts, it is necessary to try to achieve cultural correspondence, and Youdao’s translation is too straightforward and has no sense of the beauty of the Xiqu at all.

The promptless ChatGPT TT exhibits minor issues in Category 2 and Category 5. First of all, in Category 2, the translation does not rhyme at the end of the sentence as the source text does. In Category 5, the translation does not make good use of the translation technique of cultural correspondence and chooses to use direct translation for the words 愁眉不展 *chou mei bu zhan* (worried eyebrow not stretched) and 心腹事 *xin fu shi* (the things in heart and abdomen), which include body parts. The translation only shows the action of “frowning”, but does not express the emotion of “sadness” in the action of frowning. Although the phrase 心腹事 *xin fu shi* (things in heart and abdomen) contains the body parts “heart” and “abdomen”, it refers to the things that are in the mind, not to “matters close to the heart” as in the direct translation.

The prompted ChatGPT text shows an improvement in Category 2. Unlike the promptless version, it shows good rhyming in the sentences, which enhances the aesthetic appeal of the Xiqu translation. In terms of cultural correspondence, compared to the promptless version, it translates as 愁眉 *chou mei* (worried eyebrow) in the first sentence with “troubled brow”, but the body part of the second sentence is 心腹事 *xin fu shi* (things in heart and abdomen), which remains untranslated.

The promptless Gemini exhibits several errors. In Category 1, the term 摆天门 *bai tian men* (set Tianmen array) is translated, but there is a slight discrepancy, as “天门 *tian men*” is an array but not a location (the translation shows “set up camp at Tianmen”). For Category 2, the translation fails to achieve regular sentences and rhyme, and the body part “愁眉 *chou mei*” (worried eyebrow) does not culturally correspond for the same reason as mentioned above, only showing “frowning” but not specific emotions, so it was penalized in Category 5.

Prompted Gemini output demonstrates very creative solutions, but it is this creativity that creates more errors. First of all, in Category 1, Gemini makes mistakes in every sentence, with very creative additions that are entirely out of context, such as “betray my plight”, “war drums resound”, “takes the field”, and in the last sentence, when telling of Yang Silang’s mother escorting grain to Bei fan, prompted Gemini gives an unfolding description that is four sentences long, which, although the text is rich in emotion and has a significant meaning, loses the simplicity and catchiness that should have been present in the Xiqu text. Because of this, this translation cannot fulfill the function of Xiqu translation, and cannot show the social and cultural functions of Xiqu to the readers well. The translation techniques that should be paid attention to, such as the cultural correspondence of body parts, have not been handled well, and the same problem as the translation of body parts of other NMTs and GPTs mentioned above has occurred.

Criteria	DeepL	Youdao	ChatGPT	ChatGPT with prompt	Gemini	Gemini with prompt
Category 1	-1	-3	0	0	-1	-4

Category 2	-1	-1	-1	0	-1	0
Category 3	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Category 4	-1	0	0	0	0	0
Category 5	0	-1	-2	-1	-1	-1
Total	-4	-5	-3	-1	-3	-6

Table 16. Overall penalty scores for Excerpt 2

A noteworthy aspect of this paragraph is the translation of body parts, a topic to which I have dedicated an entire chapter in this dissertation. In this example, both 愁锁眉间 *chou suo mei jian* (literally means “sorrow locked in eyebrow”) and 心腹事 *xin fu shi* (literally means “heart and abdomen thing”) were translated using the **cultural correspondence** solution in my discussed translation solutions (based on Translation 1). This solution proves to be particularly suitable for translating body parts in Xiqu.

Now, let us examine how machine and AI translations handle these expressions. For 愁锁眉间 *chou suo mei jian*, both DeepL and Youdao adopted **explicitation**, omitting the reference to the body part and directly translating the intended emotion of sorrow. In contrast, ChatGPT and Gemini applied **crucial mode**, directly translating the action of “frowning”, but in doing so, they lost the emotional weight of sadness and worry conveyed in the original text.

For 心腹事 *xin fu shi*, DeepL followed the **cultural correspondence** solution, translating it as “something on my mind”, which aligns with the human translation and employs the same translation solution. However, Youdao used **omission**, completely removing the body part “心腹 *xin fu*” (heart, abdomen) and translating only the “事 *shi*”(thing). ChatGPT and Gemini retained the direct translation of “心 *xin*” (heart) but omitted “腹 *fu*” (abdomen). However, in Chinese, “心 *xin*” (heart) is commonly associated with thought generation, whereas in English, the “head” is typically considered the container of thoughts. This results in an unnatural rendering in English.

Therefore, in this example, machine and AI translations are inferior to human translation, as the **cultural correspondence** solution proves to be more effective in accurately conveying the meaning of body parts in context.

Excerpt 3

This paragraph contains two Chinese four-character idioms, 乔装改扮 *qiao zhuang gai ban* (dress up in disguise) and 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang jian ji* (knife, spear, sword, and halberd). Since two different words with the same meaning are often used to form a four-character idiom in Chinese, the best way to translate this kind of idiom is to adopt the solution of **generalization**, which only translates the meaning once. In addition, this paragraph uses the rhetorical method of simile, so it is a passage that deserves to be explored in terms of translation solution and translation quality.

Source text:

适才关口盘查紧

乔装改扮黑夜行

眼望宋营灯光影

刀枪剑戟似麻林

大胆且把宋营进

闯进宋营我就见娘亲

Translation text:

NMTs	DeepL	We've got a tight security check at the border. I travelled by night in disguise. I saw the lights of the Song camp The swords and spears look like a forest of hemp I'm bold enough to enter the Song camp I'll see my mother when I enter the Song camp
	Youdao	Just the right thing to do Walk in disguise and at night Look at Song Ying light shadow Swords, spears, and halberds are like hemp forests

		<p>Bold and put Song Ying into</p> <p>Break into the Song camp, I will see my mother</p>
GPTs	ChatGPT	<p>"Just now, the checkpoint's scrutiny was tight,</p> <p>Disguised, I travel under the cover of night.</p> <p>I see the Song camp's lights ahead,</p> <p>Weapons like a forest, densely spread.</p> <p>Boldly, I venture into the Song camp's sight,</p> <p>To see my mother, I'll brave this perilous night."</p>
	ChatGPT with prompt	<p>"Moments ago, the checkpoint's guard was tight,</p> <p>Disguised, I journey through the night.</p> <p>Ahead, the Song camp's lights do gleam,</p> <p>Their weapons dense, a forest seen.</p> <p>Boldly, I'll enter the Song camp's light,</p> <p>To find my mother, through this perilous night."</p>
	Gemini	<p>Through guarded gates I stealthily tread,</p> <p>In disguise, I venture forth, night-clad.</p> <p>Gazing upon the lights of Song's camp,</p> <p>Where blades and spears like hemp fields stand.</p> <p>With boldness, I'll enter Song's domain,</p> <p>To find my mother, there I'll gain.</p>
	Gemini with prompt	<p>Tight the checkpoint, danger's near,</p> <p>Darkness cloaks me, casting off all fear.</p> <p>(Gazing at the distant camp, a tapestry of light)</p> <p>A forest of steel, where shadows take flight.</p> <p>With courage ablaze, I'll breach their wall,</p> <p>My mother's love, my guiding call.</p>
Human translation	<p>We got questioned thoroughly at the pass</p> <p>Now we have changed our clothing in order to better move in the dark</p> <p>I can see the firelight from the Song camp</p>	

	Their weapons are thick like trees in the forest We must pluck up our courage and enter the Song camp I burst into the Song camp so I can meet with my mother
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Table 17. Translations of Excerpt 3 (retrieved: June 2024)

As seen from Table 18, the TTs generated by DeepL mainly exhibit problems related to Category 1. First of all, 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang Jian ji* (knife, spear, sword, and halberd) is a Chinese idiom, which literally means four kinds of weapons: knife, spear, sword, and halberd, denoting the generalization of weapons. In this situation, the most appropriate solution of doing English translation is generalization, generalizing the specific items into “weapons”, but DeepL chose two of the four weapons to translate, giving the false impression of referring specifically to two weapons. In addition, the phrase 似麻林 *si ma lin* refers to a dense forest, but the translator mistranslated it as “like a forest of hemp”. There is also a minor translation problem in the last sentence, where 闯进 *chuang jin* is translated as “enter”, which lacks the meaning of “break into”.

Some minor issues exist in Categories 2, 4, and 5: DeepL’s translation does not rhyme, and the punctuation is inconsistent. Because there are two idioms in this excerpt, both of them need to use the translation skill of generalizing. This TT does not use this translation skill well.

Youdao’s TT is still one of the worst. The major problems are in Categories 1 and 4. In Category 1, the translation of the first sentence is a complete mistranslation, and the word “营 ying” (camp) in the third sentence is not translated but is translated phonetically. In the fourth sentence, 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang Jian ji* (knife, spear, sword, and halberd) and “麻林 *ma lin*” (dense forest) contain the same errors as in the TT generated by DeepL. In the fifth sentence, the phrase 大胆且把宋营进 *da dan qie ba song ying jin* is directly translated as “bold and put Song Ying into”, which is also a poor translation. Another TT with major errors is Category 4, which has many grammatical errors. The first, second, and fifth sentences have no subject and are grammatically confusing, so 3 points are penalized. As for Category 2, the rhyming problem is also not addressed.

ChatGPT and Prompted ChatGPT translations are the least penalized in this group, with only minor problems in Category 1. In the last sentence, *闯进宋营我就见娘亲* *chuang jin song ying wo jiu jian niang qin* (break into the Song camp I would like to see my mother), the phrase “through this perilous night” is highlighted instead of “break into” in Prompted ChatGPT TT. This may be because the Prompted ChatGPT wanted to fulfill the rhyme scheme, so it used omission and addition simultaneously. It is also because, in the penultimate sentence, the word *宋营* *song ying* (the Song camp) has already appeared, and the last two sentences can be sung together to make a complete sentence, so the latter “宋营 *song ying*” is omitted. The optimization of Prompted GPT compared to Promptless GPT is that Prompted GPT is more suitable for singing, and the sentence correspondences are clearer.

As seen in Table 18, the TT generated by Gemini primarily exhibits issues related to Category 1. First, in the second sentence, Gemini adds a “night-clad”. In the source text, it is only stated that the main character entered the camp “in disguise”, not that he wore a night-clad, and it is possible that he disguised himself as a soldier of the Song camp. So, the addition of the translation here is a red herring. Secondly, *刀枪剑戟* *dao qiang jian ji* (knife, spear, sword, and halberd) only lists “blades and spears” and ignores the other two weapons, and does not generalize them into “weapons”. For this reason, it was penalized one point in Category 5 for failing to address the translation problem using appropriate translation solutions/skills.

As usual, Gemini with a prompt is a pie in the sky, overly free translated and deviating from the source text, more like a complete rewrite. Grammatically, Category 4 also has problems with missing subjects and incomplete sentence elements because it is heavily influenced by poetic style. Prompted Gemini also fails to employ the problem-solving translation skills typically used by human translators, as its output relies too heavily on paraphrasing.

Criteria	DeepL	Youdao	ChatGPT	ChatGPT with prompt	Gemini	Gemini with prompt
Category 1	-3	-4	-1	-1	-4	-6
Category 2	-1	-1	0	0	0	0

Category 3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Category 4	-1	-3	0	0	0	-1
Category 5	-1	-1	0	0	-1	-1
Total	-6	-9	-1	-1	-5	-8

Table 18. Overall penalty scores for Excerpt 3

As mentioned earlier, this example contains two Chinese idioms: 乔装改扮 *qiao zhuang gai ban* (change clothes and change make-up) and 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang jian ji* (knife, spear, sword, and halberd). Based on the analysis of idiom translation in this dissertation, the most appropriate translation solution is **generalization**, which is also the solution adopted in human translation. Since 刀枪剑戟 *dao qiang jian ji* (knife, spear, sword, and halberd) was analyzed in the chapter on idiom translation, I will further examine its translation here.

Looking at machine and AI translations, DeepL, Youdao, and Gemini applied the **omission**, leaving out one or two of the four weapons. I believe this solution creates the misleading impression that only specific weapons are being referred to, rather than preserving the original idiom's intended meaning of generally referring to weapons. In contrast, ChatGPT employed **generalization**, aligning with human translation in translation solutions.

Overall, in this example, machine and AI translations fall short compared to human translation, as **generalization** proves to be the most effective solution for conveying the idiomatic meaning.

Excerpt 4

The following excerpts were selected for their stylistic features. Those are parallel sentences rich in metaphors. Moreover, this excerpt text includes two characters (Muyi) that represent the name of a person without any meaning. This may cause difficulties for NMT and GPT models, so I wanted to test if it can be adequately translated.

Source text:

我好比笼中鸟有翅难展

我好比虎离山受了孤单

我好比南来雁失群飞散
我好比浅水龙久困沙滩
想当年沙滩会
一场血战
只杀得血成河尸骨堆山
只杀得杨家将东逃西散
只杀得众儿郎滚下马鞍
我被擒改名姓身脱此难
将杨字拆木易匹配良缘

Translation text: because the translation text is too long, I put it in the Appendices, please see Appendix D.

The target text translated by DeepL does not do well regarding Category 1 text meaning, and the first and third sentences are only half-translated. For example, in the first sentence, only “the bird is in a cage” is translated, but not “it is difficult to spread wings and fly”, so it fails to achieve the purpose of conveying the message as it should be. In the TT style, that is, Category 2, it does not rhyme like the original text. The prose in the last few lines of the original text is not shown in the TT. In addition, the punctuation of the output is inconsistent, and there is a grammatical error, “a bloody battle”, which is not a sentence but a phrase. Moreover, the last two sentences are somehow translated into one sentence and repeated twice, which is very strange.

The Youdao TT exhibits a significant Category 1 error: basically, every sentence has a missing textual meaning, each of the first four sentences is missing the second half of the sentence meaning, and 众儿郎 *zhong er lang* (all families) originally meant The Yang family, but Youdao TT only translated with the literal meaning of “boys”, which does not convey the original meaning. The translation of the last sentence is particularly inaccurate, with no connection to the original meaning, which is “the main character Silang changes his name and

marries the princess of an enemy country”, while this translation is “the poplar character is easy to match good marriage”. Category 2 also has a major problem, as the prose is not demonstrated, and there is no rhyme scheme. Category 4 has the same grammatical problem as DeepL: a phrase is used as a sentence.

ChatGPT is the closest to the original among these models. There are only two minor limitations; the first is in the last sentence, which does not translate the name “木易 mu yi”(name with no meaning), which is the deconstruction of the surname “Yang”, so it is a slight deviation from the original. However, this “omission” fulfills Category 5’s translation skill, because the word “Muyi” does not mean anything to non-native speakers, who only need to understand that the protagonist has disassembled a word and turned it into another name. Therefore, it uses the translation skill of “omission”. Another minor deviation from the original is in Category 2: TT does not rhyme. The prompted ChatGPT TTs have three minor limitations in Category 1. The original 沙滩会 *sha tan hui* (Beach battle) is the name of a battle, which is directly translated as “shore”, 众儿郎 *zhong er lang* (all families) has not been translated as the Yang family, but the “sons of the land”.

The promptless Gemini TTs have significant limitations in Category 1. A typical example is the second sentence, 受了孤单 *shu le gu dan* (suffered loneliness), which was translated as “lost and found”, which is incomprehensible. In the fourth sentence, 久困沙滩 *jiu kun sha tan* (have been stuck on the beach for a long time), the translation adds the phrase “I have grown”, which is unjustified. I think it is an overly deliberate attempt to change the meaning of the original text in order to make it rhyme. It is missing the point and putting the cart before the horse. The translation follows the principle of “faithfulness”, “expressiveness”, and “elegance”: “faithfulness” comes first, followed by “expressiveness”, and “elegance” comes after that. In addition, it also lacks the syntactic neatness of Category 2, and the prose style of the last four sentences is not shown.

Criteria	DeepL	Youdao	ChatGPT	ChatGPT with prompt	Gemini	Gemini with prompt
Category 1	-6	-8	-1	-3	-6	-3

Category 2	-2	-3	-1	0	-1	-1
Category 3	0	-1	0	0	0	0
Category 4	-2	-2	0	0	0	-1
Category 5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	-10	-14	-2	-3	-7	-5

Table 19. Overall penalty scores for Excerpt 4

In this paragraph, the sentences in lines 1–4 and 7–9 of the original text exhibit a well-structured parallelism. Overall, all the machine and AI translations adopted a solution to preserve the parallel structure for the first four sentences. The phrase 我好比 *wo hao bi* (literally means “I am like”) appears four times in the original text. In the translations, DeepL rendered it consistently as *I’m like* four times, Youdao also used *I’m like* four times, ChatGPT translated it as *I am like* four times, ChatGPT with prompt opted for *I’m akin to* four times, while Gemini translated it as *like* four times, and Gemini with prompt structured the sentences beginning with different animals to maintain a parallel format. All these translations employed the **copying structure** solution.

However, a slight divergence appears in lines 7–9. The human translation (Translation 1 in this dissertation) did not apply the **copying structure** in these sentences. This is likely because the phrase 只杀得 *zhi sha de* (literally means “only kill to”) in the original text does not carry substantial meaning but serves as a transition to describe the ensuing battle scene. In contrast, for machine and AI translations, ChatGPT and ChatGPT with prompt maintained the parallel structure by beginning the sentences with the word *where*, which vividly depicts the intensity of the battle.

Therefore, in terms of sentence structure correspondence, I consider ChatGPT’s solution to be superior to both human translation and other machine/AI translations (all the translations can be seen in Appendix D).

Excerpt 5

I chose this excerpt as my example because it contains Chinese characteristic clothes words rich in Chinese cultural features. This study aims to test whether NMTs and GPTs can recognize such culturally distinctive words and whether they will translate the intended meaning.

Source text:

在头上摘去胡狄冠

身上脱去了紫罗衫

沿毡帽，齐眉掩

三尺青锋挂腰间

将身来在宫门站

Translation text:

NMTs	DeepL	<p>I took off the crown of Houdini from my head. I've taken off my purple shirt. Hat on the head, eyebrows on the back. With a three-foot blade hanging from his waist. I'll stand at the palace gate</p>
	Youdao	<p>Take the Hoodie crown off your head He took off his purple shirt He wore his felt hat and pulled his eyebrows together Three feet green front hanging waist Will be standing at the palace gate</p>
GPTs	ChatGPT	<p>Removing the Hu-Di hat from my head, Shedding the purple robe from my body, Wearing a felt cap, eyebrows drawn together, A three-foot green blade hanging by my waist. I stand at the palace gate with this attire.</p>

	ChatGPT with prompt	"Removing the barbarian crown from atop my head, Shedding the purple robe, from my frame it's shed. A felt hat upon my head, concealing my gaze, A three-foot green blade at my waist, it sways. Standing at the palace gates, I now stand, a new guise."
	Gemini	From my head, the barbarian cap I take, From my body, the purple robe I shake. A felt hat low, my brows conceal, Three feet of sharpened steel, my waist does wield. At palace gates, I take my stand.
	Gemini with prompt	With a flick of my wrist, the foreign crown I cast aside, The silken robes of conquest, no longer shall they hide. (A felt hat replaces it, shielding my eyes from view) A blade of steely purpose, hangs faithful, strong, and true. At the palace gates I stand, a warrior's heart ablaze, This land, my land, for it my spirit fiercely stays!
Human translation	I take off my foreign cap And change my foreign clothes I drag the felt cap down to eyebrow-level And hang my three-foot sword at my waist Standing in front of the palace	

Table 20. Translations of Excerpt 5 (retrieved: May 2024)

As presented in Table 21, all the outputs of NMTs and GPTs are presented in Category 1 with varying degrees of issues. None of the translations reflects 紫罗衫 *zi luo shan* well. In the source text, 胡狄冠 *hu di guan* refers to the name of the people in the north or west of China in ancient times; it refers to foreign countries or foreigners in general. Therefore, 胡狄冠 *hu di guan* means “foreign cap”, and in order to correspond to it, 紫罗衫 *zi luo shan* in the second sentence also corresponds to “foreign clothes”. Because Yang Silang was captured by the Liao

(his enemy country), he removed his foreign (Liao) clothes when he returned to visit his mother. None of the translations showed the meaning of “foreign”, but only the word’s literal meaning.

In addition, DeepL has other issues in Category 1, such as Hu Di Guan’s direct translation, which fails to convey the meaning of “foreign”. In the third sentence, “eyebrows on the back” is also translated confusingly and does not convey the word’s meaning. In Category 2, the translation fails to achieve neatness and rhyme as the source text does; in Category 4, firstly, the translation fails to achieve uniformity in punctuation; secondly, there is a subject inconsistency, which leads to a grammatical mistake. In this example, the translation problem that needs to be dealt with is the translation of clothing rich in Chinese characteristics, but this has not been dealt with well. Youdao’s translation is basically the same as DeepL’s, except that the punctuation is unified in Category 4, but the last sentence lacks a subject. ChatGPT has no problem in Category 4; the punctuation is uniform, and the grammar is correct, but other problems still exist, for example, in Category 2, the rhyming at the end of sentences was not well executed.

Consider the Prompted Chat GPT, which has improved in Category 1 by translating 胡狄冠 *hu di guan* more accurately, but 紫罗衫 *zi luo shan* and 青锋 *qing feng* remain untranslated. For Category 2, Prompted ChatGPT has improved compared to the Promptless GPT by making the sentences neat and rhyming.

In this example, Gemini is the best model. It translated 胡狄冠 *hu di guan* and 青锋 *qing feng* very well, so it did well in Category 1, but for 紫罗衫 *zi luo shan*, it is translated literally. This proves that not all the translation problems were solved, so one point in Category 5 is still penalized.

It seems that Prompted Gemini over-translates at every turn. Since it always incrementally translates sentences, which makes each sentence seem cumbersome and bloated and deviates from its original meaning, it was penalized five points in Category 1. As for Category 3, its translation is not sufficient to fulfill the social function that should be achieved because its translations are not the same as the characteristics of the utterances of Xiqu, such as “faithful, strong, and true”, “this land, my land”, this form of arrangement of words or stacking of small

phrases is more like the utterances that would appear in the plays and operas of European countries. In contrast, Chinese Xiqu is more of a sentence-forming text.

Criteria	DeepL	Youdao	ChatGPT	ChatGPT with prompt	Gemini	Gemini with prompt
Category 1	-4	-4	-4	-3	-1	-5
Category 2	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0
Category 3	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Category 4	-2	-1	0	0	0	0
Category 5	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
Total	-8	-7	-6	-4	-2	-7

Table 21. Overall penalty scores for Excerpt 5

Overall results

The overall scores of the NMT and GPT models are as follows. In total, ChatGPT with prompt model achieved the lowest penalty scores on the excerpts. In contrast, Youdao achieved the highest scores on the excerpts, indicating that the ChatGPT with prompt shows the highest overall quality, while Youdao shows the lowest. For Gemini, with a prompt, there are more penalty points than without a prompt, indicating the translation quality is lower because Gemini with a prompt tends to overmodify and add information to the original text to make the translation more fulfilling. For GPT models, the ones with prompts always improve grammar and rhyming.

Excerpt	DeepL	Youdao	ChatGPT	ChatGPT with prompt	Gemini	Gemini with prompt
Excerpt 1	-8	-8	-3	-3	-6	-5
Excerpt 2	-4	-5	-3	-1	-3	-6
Excerpt 3	-6	-9	-1	-1	-5	-8
Excerpt 4	-10	-14	-2	-3	-7	-5

Excerpt 5	-8	-7	-6	-4	-2	-7
Excerpt 6	-9	-11	-6	-4	-6	-9
Excerpt 7	-3	-7	-3	-2	-4	-2
Excerpt 8	-8	-11	-1	-1	-4	-5
Excerpt 9	-5	-6	-5	-3	-5	-4
Excerpt 10	-6	-11	-4	-3	-5	-2
Excerpt 11	-3	-5	-1	-1	0	-2
Excerpt 12	-5	-8	-2	-2	-3	-6
Excerpt 13	-8	-9	-5	-3	-3	-6
TOTAL	-83	-111	-42	-31	-53	-67

Table 22. Overall penalty scores of NMT and GPT models (with and without prompt)

8.6. Conclusion

This study investigated the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) translation tools to Chinese Xiqu, focusing on this traditional art form’s poetic language and cultural intricacies. The research revealed insights into their strengths and limitations in translating complex artistic texts by comparing Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) models. Through analyzing several examples, we can preliminarily conclude that machine/AI translation, in some cases, adopts the same translation solutions as human translators for the same expressions. Machine/AI translation (e.g., Excerpt 1) performs better than human translation regarding structural correspondence within a text. However, when dealing with culturally loaded words and expressions such as idioms or body-part expressions, human translation is superior to machine/AI translation.

The evaluation process demonstrated that GPT models, particularly ChatGPT with prompt guidance, consistently outperformed NMT and other models in maintaining overall translation quality, with the lowest penalty scores. This indicates its effectiveness in preserving artistic style, emotional nuances, and cultural references inherent in Xiqu libretti. In contrast, models like Youdao exhibited the highest penalty scores, reflecting lower translation quality. The findings also highlighted that while GPT models with prompts generally improved grammatical

accuracy and rhyming, they occasionally introduced overly modified or additional information, as seen with Gemini models.

These results underscore the potential of AI-driven models, especially GPT, in advancing the translation of culturally rich and artistically complex texts like Chinese Xiqu. However, the research also emphasizes the need for careful, prompt engineering and further refinement to mitigate challenges such as over-modification. This study contributes to the growing exploration of AI translation in specialized artistic domains, offering valuable insights for both translation studies researchers and AI developers.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to explore the English translation solutions for Chinese Xiqu. In the main section of the dissertation, I use case studies to demonstrate practical solutions to take when encountering different translation challenges from various aspects of Chinese Xiqu. Research on the English translation solutions of Chinese Xiqu is currently relatively scarce, and there is an even less comprehensive summary of translation solutions in this field. Therefore, in this dissertation, I summarized an integrated typology of translation solutions suitable for Chinese Xiqu, which will contribute to Xiqu translation. As Chapter Seven mentions, after testing, Pym's translation solution types are suitable for Xiqu translation. His solutions cover a wide range of areas and use terminology that is simple and easy to understand. Therefore, I adopted his terms to summarize my translation solutions.

In this chapter, I will conclude my research. I will present this dissertation's contributions, discuss its limitations, and provide suggestions for future research.

9.1. Contributions

First of all, regarding whether a systematic translation solution can be constructed and applied to address culturally loaded words and expressions and thus promote the English translation of Xiqu, this study also draws a conclusion. Compared with previous studies, this dissertation's most significant contribution is that it presents a preliminary and comprehensive analysis of Xiqu translation, proposing an integrated Xiqu translation solution for Xiqu texts. In this dissertation, I have reviewed Xiqu translation and found that existing research primarily focuses on isolated translation issues, with no comprehensive framework summarizing translation solutions for Xiqu texts. Therefore, Table 23 represents the first attempt to propose an integrated typology of translation solutions for Xiqu. This serves as a practical guide for applying translation solutions in Xiqu translation practice, thereby promoting its development.

The translation solution terms I analyzed are initially based on the research traditions of each respective field, as they belong to vastly different directions (e.g., modal particles, idioms). However, my framework standardizes these terms using Pym's classification as a foundation. This synthesis of translation solutions applies to Xiqu and extends to the translation of all

Chinese cultural texts. Since Xiqu serves as a representative form of Chinese culture, it encompasses various cultural terms and expressions. Therefore, these analyses can be utilized as a generalized framework to offer solutions for the broader Chinese cultural translation field.

Now, I will show the **overall summary of the table**:

Based on all the analysis, I conclude that Xiqu translation can adopt Pym's translation solution types, though I have made some modifications, including changes in the understanding of terminology. I will explain these terms again one by one.

Cruise mode can be understood as a literal translation, requiring no special translation techniques—just a straightforward bilingual translation. In Xiqu translation, **copying** is often used, such as when translating personal names or Chinese classical musical instruments, where **copying sound** is commonly applied. For the parallel sentence structures frequently found in Xiqu, **copying structure** can be used to translate more aligned with the original, maintaining the literary quality of the text. Xiqu characters often have a strict hierarchy in their interactions. If there is a need to weaken the tone, we can use **perspective change** solutions like **changing sentence focus, changing semantic focus, changing voice, and changing sentence types**; **density change** refers to changes in the density of the translation compared to the source text. This change can occur through the following solutions: **generalization**, during the translation process, specific concepts or details from the source language are replaced with broader, more generalized terms or expressions in the target language. **Specification** refers to replacing vague or general terms from the source language with more specific words or details in the target language. **Explicitation**, during translation, makes implicit information, cultural background, or omitted language from the source text explicit in the target language. In comparison to Pym's original solution types, I have omitted implicitation. This is because, in Xiqu script translation, the goal is to more effectively retain and communicate cultural elements, making it easier for the audience to understand the Xiqu language. Implicitation, which involves leaving out specific details to make the translation more concise, contradicts this goal, as it would obscure some of the cultural and contextual richness of the original text. It is worth mentioning that **compensation** is frequently used in Xiqu text translation. Compensation refers to the supplementation of information in new places in the text, such as through footnotes or paratexts,

to enhance the comprehensibility of the translation. Since script textual translations are not constrained by time or space, Xiqu translations for publication often provide explanations of historical allusions and character relationships beforehand or incorporate cultural knowledge within the translated text. The two translations we studied both employed this solution. The official Chinese version provides a detailed introduction and explanation of the original story and its background before the translation. Scott’s translation intersperses numerous explanations within the text, sometimes using footnotes to offer additional context for readers. It helps readers gain a general understanding of the story before engaging with the translation, facilitates comprehension of the translated text, and contributes to the dissemination of excellent cultural allusions and traditions. Another frequently used solution is **cultural correspondence**. Whether translating body parts, idioms, or culture-specific items, if an equivalent expression exists in the target language, it often becomes the preferred translation. This solution conveys the underlying meaning to the readers and allows them to experience the cultural essence embedded in the original text. Regarding **material change**, this is one of my modifications, as I also analyzed in Chapter seven. Pym considers omission as not being a translation solution, arguing that if an item is omitted, another translation solution must be employed to compensate for the omitted content. However, in Xiqu translation, **omission** is frequently used, particularly in translating MPs. **Linguistic amplification** can be seen as a form of addition that aids comprehension, where certain linguistic items are introduced to make the text more accessible to the readers.

Based on the above, I conclude that the solutions for Xiqu text translation (subtitle translation solutions are not included) can be summarized as shown in Table 23:

Cruise mode (normal use of language skills, no special solutions are needed)		
Copying	Copying words	Copying sounds
	Copying structure	Copying sentence structure
Expression Change	Perspective Change	Changing sentence focus Changing semantic focus

		Changing voice Changing sentence types
	Density Change	Generalisation/Specification Explication Joining sentences Cutting sentences
	Compensation	New place in text (footnotes, paratexts)
	Cultural Correspondence	Corresponding idioms Corresponding culture-specific items Corresponding body parts
Material change	Text change	Omission Linguistic amplification

Table 23. Translation solutions for Chinese Xiqu texts

Secondly, for subtitle translation. Unlike script translation, subtitle translation has time constraints and requires more concise expressions. Therefore, the **omission** is frequently used in subtitle translation to remove unnecessary elements, such as names that do not contribute to the audience's understanding. Sometimes, **addition** is used to clarify character relationships, and **adding punctuation marks** can also improve understanding, such as adding ellipses to suggest that there is more to be said. **Changing semantic focus** by converting rhetorical questions into declarative sentences can make the meaning more transparent and help the audience understand the text more quickly. **Cultural correspondence** can make the meaning of the source text more transparent to the target audience. Regardless of the solution used, subtitle translation follows a fundamental principle: to facilitate rapid comprehension of the source text meaning, sometimes at the cost of neglecting the aesthetic features of the Xiqu, such as rhyme and ornate language. This distinguishes subtitle translation from script translation (See Table 11).

Thirdly, I have also examined and compared the results of human translation and machine/AI translation, identifying patterns in their translation solutions, which is a new attempt. The findings reveal that, in some cases, machine/AI translation adopts the same translation solutions

as human translators for specific expressions. Regarding structural correspondence within a text, AI translation (e.g., Excerpt 4) even outperforms human translation. However, for culturally loaded words and expressions such as idioms or body parts, human translation remains superior to machine/AI translation.

9.2. Limitations and suggestions

This dissertation is considered an initial attempt to study translation solutions for Chinese Xiqu, leaving many issues to be explored and improved upon.

First, the corpus used in this dissertation is relatively limited and does not fully encompass the diversity of Chinese Xiqu. Chinese Xiqu comprises various genres, such as Jingju, Kunqu, Yueju, etc., each with its artistic style, linguistic characteristics, and performance forms. This study focuses solely on the Jingju genre without adequately demonstrating the application of translation solutions across different genres. Therefore, future research should expand the corpus by including more representative Xiqu genres and styles, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the applicability of translation solutions in diverse Xiqu contexts.

Secondly, the number of reference translations available for this study is limited. Whether it is translations of Chinese Xiqu by foreign Sinologists or significant works by Chinese translators, systematically collecting and analyzing more translations—especially those that are representative or widely recognized—could bring new possibilities and more significant insights to the research. Comparative analyses of translations could uncover specific solutions employed by translators in linguistic conversion, cultural transmission, and rhythm handling, as well as the influence of different translation contexts on the works. I attempted to locate translations of the same Xiqu by different translators, but found the number limited. Therefore, future research should strengthen collaboration with scholars and institutions in related fields to uncover more valuable translations.

Additionally, this study has not yet applied the summarized translation solutions in practice to assess their feasibility and effectiveness in specific Xiqu works. The value of translation solutions lies not only in theoretical exploration but also in practical application. For instance, applying the proposed solutions to Xiqu works that have not been translated or are poorly

translated and then comparing and analyzing the results against existing official translations (if they have) could provide a more direct evaluation of the solutions' applicability and areas for improvement. Such practical research would enrich the study and offer concrete guidance for future Xiqu translation endeavors.

To address these issues, I put forward the following suggestions for scholars, including myself, engaged in translating Chinese Xiqu in future studies:

First of all, collecting and comparing as many translation resources as possible is essential, including historically classic translations and the latest versions. Wherever feasible, comparative analyses of different translators' solutions to the same text should be conducted to provide a more comprehensive foundation for developing translation theories.

Second, these translation solutions should be applied to various Xiqu genres (e.g., Jingju, Yuju, Yueju, etc.) to assess their adaptability and effectiveness in meeting translation needs.

Third, it is necessary to put translation theories into practice to evaluate their validity in real-world scenarios. For example, a selected Xiqu work could be translated experimentally, and the resulting translation could then be compared with existing translations to identify differences and gain valuable insights. This process would refine the proposed translation solutions and provide practical ideas for Xiqu translation practices.

In the future, researchers can enhance Xiqu translation theory and solutions by expanding corpora, deepening comparative studies, and integrating practical applications. AI translation can also be rationally applied, emerging AI translations can be tested, and if applicable to cultural translation, they can be appropriately adopted to improve Xiqu translation efficiency. Such efforts will contribute to the international dissemination of Chinese traditional culture and enrich cross-cultural communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Modal particle 啊 (a) in four sentence types in *Silang Visits His Mother*

Declarative sentences

可也是啊。	You're right	Omission
可也是啊!	That's true.	Omission
我再猜呀 (ya)。	I'll try again	Omission
待盟誓啊。	Let me take the oath!	Omission
时常地打仗啊。	All the time!	Omission
不敢偷闲哪 (na) 。	We dare not.	Omission
一言难尽呐 (na) 。	It is a long story!	Changing semantic focus
狠心肠将一家派别帐外啊!	Decisively, I take leave of all my family members and exit from the tent.	Omission
我给您出个主意啊	I have an idea for you	Omission
如今要救驸马爷啊	If you want to save your husband's life.	Omission
听我跟您说啊	Listen while I tell you	Omission
待会啊,	When you meet her,	Omission
她兴许啊,	Maybe	Omission
如今啊,	It's come to this:	Explicitation
是得拦着点啊	We will certainly help you	Linguistic amplification
我给驸马爷松捆哪 (na)	I am untying your husband	Omission
说的是啊	You are right	Omission

不行啊，	It's not working!	Linguistic amplification
您哪（na），	Null	Omission
您哪（na），	You	Omission
是啊，	Yes	Omission
您这么一乐啊，	Once you are happy	Omission
我母道你是个贤德的人哪（na）。	My mother speaks highly of you.	Omission
要是再回营探母啊，	If you dare go to meet your mother again,	Omission
再要是回营探母	If you go to meet your mother again, then...	Linguistic amplification

Interrogative sentences

敢把他老人家怎么样啊？	How would I dare be dissatisfied?	Explicitation
到底猜着了没有啊？	Have I finally got the right answer?	Omission
还要叫咱家盟誓啊？	You want me swear it?	Omission
到底怎么长，怎么短呐（na）？	How would I be punished?	Explicitation
怎么样啊？	What will happen?	Explicitation
怎么在阿哥身上打搅哇（wa）？	Why you are bothering our son?	Omission
你倒是杨什么呀（ya）？	Yang who?	Omission
怎么样啊？	Then what?	Linguistic amplification
哪的话啊？	Not at all.	Explicitation
拿什么呀（ya）？	Give you what?	Omission

可有令箭哪 (na) ?	Do you have the arrow of command?	Omission
我说你跟这儿裹什么乱哪 (na)	What are you doing here?	Omission
你哪知道啊?	You wouldn't know it.	Explication
二位国舅上殿何事啊?	What do you two come here for?	Omission
您要的哪门子巧腔啊您!	What are you doing here?	Explication
当初盗令啊?	Stealing the arrow of command?	Omission
干什么呀 (ya) ?	What are you doing?	Omission
您上这边干什么呀 (ya) ?	What are you doing here?	Omission
这可怎么办啊?	What can I do?	Omission
您二位谁跟谁啊?	You are her daughter.	Explication
怎么样啊?	Then what?	Linguistic amplification

Imperative sentences

带路啊!	Lead the way!	Omission
退班哪 (na) !	Dismissed!	Omission
马来啊!	Get my horse!	Omission
驸马爷只可一赦, 不可一斩哪 (na) !	He should be forgiven, instead of being killed.	Changing semantic focus
您倒是快点说啊	Tell me quickly!	Omission

Exclamative sentences

儿的老娘啊!	My dear mother!	Omission
丫头啊,	Maid!	Omission
公主啊!	My dear princess!	Omission

公主啊！	My princess!	Omission
我的妻呀（ya）	My dear wife!	Omission
公主啊	Princess!	Omission
驸马爷呀（ya）	My dear husband	Omission
公主啊	Princess!	Omission
驸马爷呀（ya）	My dear!	Omission
我的儿啊！	My son!	Omission
延辉我的儿啊！	Yanhui, my son!	Omission
娘啊！	Mother!	Omission
娘啊！	Mom!	Omission
儿啊！	My son!	Omission
儿的娘啊！	My mother!	Omission
儿啊！	My son!	Omission
儿啊！	My son!	Omission
儿的娘啊！	Mother.	Omission
妻呀（ya）	My wife!	Omission
我的妻啊！	My wife!	Omission
我的夫啊！	My husband!	Omission
儿啊！	My son!	Omission
我哭一声延辉我的儿啊！	Yanhui, my son!	Omission
我的夫啊！	My husband!	Omission
我那苦命的（ya）！	My poor wife!	Omission
儿呀！	My son!	Omission
儿呀！	My son!	Omission
夫啊！	My husband!	Omission
公主啊	Princess!	Omission
公主啊	Princess!	Omission
公主啊	Princess!	Omission

太后/母娘啊	Empress dowager/my dear mother!	Omission
我的丈母娘啊!	My dear mother!	Omission
我的关东糖啊!	My Guandong Sugar!	Omission
蒂根儿就蒙事啊	It was just a hoax.	Changing semantic focus
蒙事啊!	Just a hoax!	Explicitation
二位国舅啊	You two Royal Uncles!	Omission
我说二位国舅啊,	My two Royal Uncles!	Omission
我说二位国舅呀 (ya) 。	You, my two Royal Uncles!	Omission
公主啊,	Princess,	Omission
公主啊!	Princess!	Omission
你瞧瞧这小公母俩哭得多可怜呐 (na)	How pathetic this couple are!	Omission

Appendix B

The two translation versions of body-part expressions in *Silang Visits His Mother*

1-1

Source text	Translation 1	Translation 2
泪珠洒落在胸前 chest	Teardrops roll down to my chest	All day my tears do not dry
我要你的脑袋 head	I'll have your head	Want your head
泪流满面 face	Tears stream down my face	Tears flow
黄沙盖脸 face	Sand cover by face	Yellow sand will cover my face
低下头来	Lower my head	Bend my head
用手 hand	With both hands	[null]
心中似刀裁 heart	Feel like there are knives piecing heart	Feel my heart pierced as by a knife

要你们脑袋 head	Have you beheaded	Demand your heads
齙脏的手 hand	Dirty hands	Your hands are dirty
把脸调过去 face	Turn face away	[null]
小心你的脑袋 head	Watch out for your head	Watch out for your head
痛伤怀	Heart breaking	Wounds in the heart
腿都疼了	My legs hurt	My legs are tired

1-X

Source text	Literal meaning	Translation 1	Translation 2
肝肠痛断 liver and intestine	Terribly pained in one's liver and intestine	Terribly pained in my heart	I am faint thinking
愁锁眉尖 eyebrow	The brows furrowed with sorrows	Wearing a sorrowful face	Banish his cares
泪满腮*2 cheek	Tears roll down cheek	Tears roll down face	Tears run down my cheeks
眼望 eye	Seeing	Facing	Look towards
刺胸怀 chest	Stab chest	Stab heart	The most hardhearted man would grieve
泪满腮 cheek	Tears roll down cheek	Tears flood my eyes	Tears flow down my cheeks
抹脖子 neck	Cut the neck	Cut my throat	Cut the throat
骆驼打哈欠——扭过脖去了 neck	Turn her neck	She's turned her face again	The crane must strut on the roof beam

1-null

Source text	Literal meaning	Translation 1	Translation 2
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愁眉不展 eyebrow	The brows wrinkled	Look concerned	Frowning and unsmiling
心事 heart (1)	Something in one's heart	On one's mind	Something on one's mind
心事 heart (2)	Something in one's heart	On one's mind	Troubles
心事 heart (3)	Something in one's heart	On one's mind	Problems
心事 heart (4)	Something in one's heart	On one's mind	Troubled thoughts
满腹机关 abdomen	Things in abdomen	Things in mind	Hidden secret
腹内机关 abdomen	Things in abdomen	Things in mind	Inner thoughts
紧闭口 mouth	Close the mouth tightly	Careful about what I say	Control one's tongue
把心放宽 heart (1)	Make heart relax	Feel relieved	Feel at ease
把心放宽 heart (2)	Make heart relax	Feel relieved	My heart is freed of worry
愁眉得展 eyebrow	The wrinkled brows relaxed	Trouble could be solved	Furrowed brow loses its frown
愁眉不展 eyebrow (1)	The brows wrinkled	Feeling sorrowful	With furrowed brow
愁眉不展 eyebrow (2)	The brows wrinkled	Feeling sorrowful	Being troubled
心腹事 heart and abdomen (1)	Things in the heart and abdomen	Something in one's mind	Have a secret

心腹事 heart and abdomen (2)	Things in the heart and abdomen	Something in one's mind	Something on my mind
举目回头 eye & head	Raise eyes and turn head round	[null]	Raising my eyes and lifting my head
到手	Get in one's hand	Get it	Get it into my hand
心暗转 heart	The heart run inwardly	Think what to do	In thought
巧计在心间 heart	Clever trick in heart	Have thought of a clever trick	A plan comes to mind
皮肉贱 skin and flesh	Low-down skin and flesh	A naughty boy	Needs spanking
心悬 heart	Heart is pending	Left in suspense	Lose courage
心安 heart	Heart is relieved	Feel relieved	Be peaceful in heart
喜在心 heart	Feel happy in heart	Feel happy in mind	Cannot make out for concern
交头接耳 head & ear	Head to head, ear to ear, whisper to each other	Spread the rumor	Discuss this in public
削发为僧 hair	Cut hair and became a monk	[] became a monk	Became a monk and had his hair shaven
愁眉解 eyebrow	wrinkled brows relaxed	Set one's mind at rest	Rueful countenance disappears
挂心怀 heart	Have somebody in heart	Have sb in mind	(omission)

哭得肝肠坏 liver and intestine	Cry to the liver and intestines broken	Have a good cry	(omission)
狠心肠 heart and intestines	Ruthless heart and intestines	I must be decisive/Decisively	I must
耳旁又听 ear	Beside the ears	[null]..+hearing	[null]..+I hear
接嘴巴	Take the mouth	Slap you	Strikes him
斩首 head	Cut the head	Be killed	Be executed
抹脖子 neck	Cut the neck	kill myself	Commit suicide
莫要记在心 heart	Don't remember in heart	Please don't mind	Don't bother to mention it at all

Appendix C

The two translation versions of four-character idioms in *Silang Visits His Mother*

LT: literal translation, FT: free translation, AT: abridged translation, BT: borrowing translation

Source text	Translation 1		Translation 2
插翅难飞	Stop me from crossing the border	FT	Even if I had wings it would be difficult
东逃西散	Scattered in every direction	AT	Fled and scattered East and West
肝肠痛断	Terribly pained in my heart	BT	I am faint thinking of ...
愁锁眉间	Wear a sorrowful face	BT	His cares
愁眉不展	Look concerned	BT	Frowning and unsmiling
满腹机关	What is in the mind	FT	Hidden secret

秦楼楚馆	Brothel	AT	Pavilion of Ch'in and the Ch'u Hall(+foodnote: these are euphemistic terms for the sing-song girl quarters)
琵琶别弹	Fall in love with someone else	FT	Wish to take a concubine
意马心猿(心猿意马)	-	Omission	You would like to flee to them, you cannot decide what to do
泪流满面	Tears stream down my face	LT	Tears flow
恩德如山	Kindness	FT	Favors weighty as mountains
巧言改辩	Talk so fancy	FT	Let words put you off
快马加鞭	Ride a fast horse	LT	With a whip applied to a swift horse
各为其主	-	Omission	On behalf of their own rulers
乔装改扮	Change our clothing	AT	Disguised myself with skill
刀枪剑戟	Their weapons	AT	The swords, spears and arrows

龙行虎步	Regal walk	AT	omission
谢天谢地	Thank heaven and earth	LT	I thank the gods
一言难尽	It is a long story	FT	It is difficult to say a word
交头接耳	Spread any rumor	AT	Discuss this in public
灯花结彩(张灯结彩)	Decorations	AT	The wick in the lamp sparkles brightly
隐姓瞒名(隐姓埋名)	Take an alias	AT	Concealed my true name
福寿康宁	Blessed long life	AT	Happiness and a long life
胆战惊(胆战心惊)	Shaking with fear	FT	(omission)
昏迷不醒	Fainted in the corner of the palace	FT	Confused, cannot make it out
长生不老	Live forever	AT	Have a long life or live to be an old man
事不过三	The third time is the charm	LT	Third time lucky

Appendix D

English translation for Excerpt 4 in Chapter Eight carried out by NMTs and GPTs

Excerpt 4 (retrieved: May, 2024)

NMTs	DeepL	<p>I'm like a bird in a cage with wings.</p> <p>I'm like a tiger that's left the mountain and is alone.</p> <p>I'm like a goose that's lost its flock.</p>
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		<p>I'm like a dragon in shallow water stuck on a beach</p> <p>Thinking of the beach meeting in the past</p> <p>A bloody battle</p> <p>The blood and bones of the Yangs were piled up on the mountain.</p> <p>The Yangs fled and scattered.</p> <p>All the sons and daughters fell off their horses.</p> <p>I was captured and changed my name to get out of this.</p> <p>I was captured and changed my name to get out of this.</p>
	Youdao	<p>I'm like a bird in a cage with wings</p> <p>I'm like a tiger alone</p> <p>I'm like a wild goose from the south</p> <p>I'm like a dragon on a beach</p> <p>Back in the day at the beach</p> <p>A bloody battle</p> <p>A river of blood and a mountain of bones</p> <p>Only to kill the Yang family scattered east and west</p> <p>Just get the boys out of the saddle</p> <p>I got caught changing my name and getting out</p> <p>The poplar character is easy to match good marriage</p>
GPTs	ChatGPT	<p>I am like a bird in a cage, wings struggling to spread,</p> <p>I am like a tiger away from the mountain, experiencing loneliness,</p> <p>I am like a goose from the south, losing its flock and scattering,</p> <p>I am like a dragon in shallow water, long trapped on the shore.</p> <p>In the past, on the battlefield,</p> <p>There was a bloody battle,</p> <p>Where blood flowed into rivers and corpses piled into mountains,</p>

		<p>Where the Yang family generals fled in all directions, Where countless young men fell from their saddles. Captured and renamed, I escaped this ordeal, Dissecting the character "Yang", hoping for a fortunate match.</p>
	<p>ChatGPT with prompt</p>	<p>I'm akin to a caged bird, wings yearning to spread in vain, I'm akin to a tiger, severed from mountains, embracing loneliness's pain, I'm akin to a southern goose, lost amidst scattered flights, I'm akin to a dragon in shallow waters, stranded in plight.</p> <p>Ah, those days upon the shore, A crimson battle did roar, Where blood formed rivers, and corpses mountains bore, Where Yang's generals fled, scattering far and wide, Where sons of the land fell from their steeds' stride.</p> <p>Captured, renamed, escaping adversity's cruel grasp, Disassembling 'Yang' for a match, altering fate's clasp."</p>
	<p>Gemini</p>	<p>Like a caged bird, my wings are bound, Like a tiger away from its mountain, I'm lost and found. Like a goose from the south, my flock has flown, Like a shallow dragon, stranded on the sand, I've grown. I recall the battle of Sha Tan Beach, A bloody clash, where rivers of blood did breach. The Yang family scattered, their forces torn, Their warriors dismounted, their spirits worn. I was captured, my name changed, my life spared, From this ordeal, I was repaired. The Yang name dismantled, a new match made,</p>

		A new path forged, a new fate displayed.
	Gemini with prompt	<p>A caged bird with wings that yearn to soar, A tiger away from its mountain, feeling forlorn. A southern goose lost from its flock, scattered and alone, A shallow water dragon long stranded on the sand. I recall the battle of Sand Beach, a clash so dire, Where blood flowed like a river, bodies piled like a pyre. The Yang family generals scattered east and west, Their warriors fell from saddles, their spirits suppressed. Captured, I shed my name, a new life to embrace, Escaping the clutches of fate, a perilous race. The Yang character I split, its form rearranged, Seeking a partner in love, my destiny changed.</p>
Human translation		<p>Like a bird in the cage, I cannot spread my wings and fly Like a tiger leaving the mountain, I am lonely inside Like a wild goose flying south, I was left behind by my flock Like a dragon in shallow water, I have been trapped on a sand beach for so long I recall the gathering at Sand Beach It was a bloody battle Blood flowed like a river and corpses piled up like a mountain The Yang family was scattered in every direction The warriors rolled off their saddles as they were slaughtered I was captured, and hid my identity in order to survive Now I am married under a false alias, “Mu Yi”</p>