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Humor Translation in American Sitcom: A Case Study on Chinese Translation of Modern Family

Submitted to
Department of Linguistics and Translation
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

by

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Abstract

Research and studies on humor translation of television subtitles are of much importance, and also have a great influence on intercultural communication and exchange. Over the years, many scholars studied humor translation from various perspectives and analyzed how linguistic and cultural barriers can be surmounted to convey and reproduce the same or similar humorous effect. However, relevant studies on translation with consideration of speaker’s idiolect, and analyses of the entertainment trend in humor translation are still not sufficient. Understanding idiolects of different characters help improve the plot development, and enrich the character images, but, in reality, such function and importance of rendering humor with consideration of different idiolect of each character have been neglected in many circumstances. Besides, the entertainment trend that appeared in the translation of humor in sitcoms has been a phenomenon in China that cannot be ignored. The influence of using stereotypical and formulated popular expressions to render humor is not clear and still needs further study. The author analyzes humor translation of one American sitcom based on Christiane Nord’s functionalist approach and examines the humor translation of different characters by analyzing their distinctive idiolect. Besides, the author analyzes the entertainment trend in humor translation of the sitcom, trying to provide a new lens for research of humor translation in television works.

Keywords: humor translation. Modern Family. Functionalism. subtitling translation. entertainment trend
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

The spread of humor and comedy of different countries has been a huge challenge because humor is related not only to culture, but also to various elements such as geography, value orientation, and so forth. Over the past few decades, thanks to the rapid development of the omnipresent Internet, numerous foreign television works have been introduced into mainland China and have attracted the attention and affection of many target audiences. By watching foreign films and television dramas, Chinese audiences have opportunities to broaden their horizons and understand different cultures and histories. However, the humor of television works is different from that of written works. The expressions of humor in television works are more diverse in that non-verbal humor can be expressed through the plots, pictures, and sounds, etc. But more often, humor is presented in the form of verbal language. For translators, reproducing the verbal humor of the source language is undoubtedly a big challenge. In order to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, scholars have done a lot of research and tried to find ways to solve problems in verbal humor translation. The increasing attention on translation studies boosts the emergence of many translation theories and strategies, among which the principle of equivalence and functionalist approach have been much implemented in the analysis of verbal humor translation. Besides, different strategies such as domestication, foreignization, adaptation, and others have been analyzed in the subtitling translation, too. In addition to analyzing
humor translation, this paper tries to point out two other problems and find potential and effective solutions.

Firstly, in sitcoms, each character has his or her personality characteristics, so their idiolect and humor-related expressions are more or less different. For the source language audience, they can accurately understand the humor presented by different characters through solely appreciating the source language. However, for the target audience (especially for those who cannot understand the source language and culture), they can only depend on the translations to understand the humor. In fact, many scholars and translators focus on the verbal humor translation, while neglecting to pay attention to idiolects of different characters, resulting in some humorous expressions forming a “fixed” or “stereotypical” translation. Given the facts above, it is necessary to point out the problems and attach due importance to the consideration of idiolect when doing the verbal humor translation.

Secondly, the entertainment trend in verbal humor translation has been a prominent issue. The entertainment trend (娛樂化傾向) literally means a phenomenon following the trends and popular cultures which usually bear the implication of entertainment. It often appears in translation activities, especially in those of humor translation, and such phenomenon is famous for its use of popular expressions such as buzzwords, online slangs, idioms, ancient Chinese poems, and so on to render the source text. Using the translation following the entertainment trend would bring a feeling of closeness and intimacy to target audiences. The emergence of such a trend in the translation of humorous lines in sitcoms suggests a fact that some translators focus more on target
audiences than the source text and want to attract target audiences’ attention and affection so as to realize the goals of improving ratings or seeking profit. At present, some scholars have noticed this phenomenon and started to study it. Chen Chen studied the entertainment trend in subtitles translation, and the strategies of rewriting and adaptation used to translate such a phenomenon. Also, he summarized several categories of entertainment trend in translation (77-80). Wang Jinghua pointed out three factors that influence the entertainment trend in subtitle translation, including the patrons, translators, and audiences (147). However, the influence of translation using entertainment-oriented expressions on verbal humor, as well as the viewer’s perceptions of such phenomenon in subtitling translation, are still unclear. Therefore, this paper focuses on the three aspects mentioned above, i.e., studying verbal humor translation in the sitcom, analyzing the verbal humor translation with consideration of different idiolects, and exploring the entertainment trend in humor translation through qualitative and quantitative analyses.

1.2 Research purpose and significance

As mentioned above, humor in television works is mainly present in the form of verbal language, which naturally reiterates the importance of studying verbal humor translation. Through good translations, verbal humor can be smoothly spread to other parts of the world, realizing the international communication and exchange. This paper hopes to review and reflect on the verbal humor translation from different perspectives, tries to analyze the verbal humor translation in subtitles of one American sitcom and
find the difficulties and corresponding solutions of the translation, and explore the effect of different translation strategies on humor expression. In addition, this paper attempts to analyze the verbal humor translation with consideration of different character’s idiolect through case studies, helping bring out the importance for translators to think more on the idiolects of different characters during the translation process. With the support of questionnaire surveys, this paper aims for analyzing the entertainment trend of humor translation in recent years, and finding out the influence of this phenomenon on humor translation, and the audiences’ attitudes towards this trend when watching the television works. Through the discussion of the above issues, this paper aims to attract translators’ attention to different character’s idiolect and the entertainment trend during the process of translating humor. It is hoped that there will be more research to look at humor translation and related issues in order to better spread humor in subtitling translation of television works, and it is also expected that this paper can provide suggestions and thoughts for future research on humor and subtitle translation.

1.3 Research question and methodology

This paper studies verbal humor translation in *Modern Family*, tries to build an applicable analysis framework in examining verbal humor translation in the sitcom, analyze the humorous lines with the consideration of idiolect, review the present entertainment trend in the verbal humor translation in subtitling, and analyze the influence of this phenomenon on conveying humor. It is hoped that this paper would be
helpful to subtitling practitioners and researchers who come to be aware of the variety of types of humor in the sitcom and also come to realize the issues that are previously overlooked, i.e., translating humor with consideration of idiolect of different characters and be ‘loyal’ to the intentions of screenwriters who wish to create the specific figures and personalities. Also, it is hoped that this paper can give some reflections on the entertainment trend in humor translation, and provide food for thoughts about the influence of this phenomenon in conveying humor and cultures.

1.3.1 Research questions

Based on the current issues related to humor translation and subtitle translation, this paper asks the following research questions:

(1) Is the functionalist approach a pragmatic principle in guiding humor translation of subtitling?

(2) Does the entertainment trend in translation always help convey the humorous effect?

(3) How important is it to consider the idiolect when translating humor in subtitling?

Is idiolect always a negligible part of humor translation?

1.3.2 Methodology: qualitative and quantitative analysis combined

This paper gives a study of the American sitcom Modern Family (11 seasons in total). And cases from 11 seasons of this sitcom are expected to reflect most of the issues and problems relating to humor translation that might be involved. This paper
mainly adopts both qualitative and quantitative analyses to illustrate the author’s points. For verbal humor, the author classifies the humor in the sitcom and selects representative examples for elaboration. For the part of verbal humor translation, the author explains issues by case studies. In addition, this paper collects the results from questionnaires through the quantitative method. With regard to verbal humor translation and audience adaptability, the author has consulted the opinions and preferences of the audience through the questionnaires. For the analysis of entertainment trends in humor translation, this paper uses the valid responses of the questionnaire as an analytical foundation, and elaborates on the advantages, disadvantages, and the potential influence on entertainment trend of humor translation, and puts forward relevant suggestions.

1.4 Project structure

Chapter one provides the introduction of this paper, which includes the research background, research purposes and significance, research questions, and the methods used for analysis and discussions. Named as the literature review, chapter two reviews some related research and studies of predecessors, mainly focusing on the areas of humor and humor translation, subtitling translation on verbal humor. Each of these areas covers different topics. Chapter three introduces the theoretical foundation of this paper, i.e., the functionalist approach for analysis of verbal humor translation analysis. Specifically, the introduction of German functionalist school and Christiane Nord’s “function plus loyalty” will be given. Chapter four explains how the subtitling corpus
was built, including why the specific source was chosen as the corpus foundation, and how the corpus was extracted and collected. As the analysis part, chapter five gives analysis and discussions on verbal humor and its translation in the subtitling of the chosen sitcom. Besides, this part mainly divides the verbal humor of this sitcom into three levels, i.e., linguistic, cultural, and general level, and then analyzes the humor and its translations through dissecting in different cases. In addition, the responses of the questionnaires play an important role in analyzing and provide answers to the proposed questions. As the last part, chapter six summarizes the analyses and findings, shows the limitations of this paper, and also gives potential suggestions for future studies.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Humor studies and humor translation

The presence of humor triggers laughter and amuses people. Chang Nam Fung defined laughter of our contemporary world as “a type of stimulation that tends to excite amusement” (Yes Prime Manipulator 77). The term “humor” can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. At that time, humor meant a kind of humoral medicine. Victor Raskin divided two kinds of humor into the unintended and the intended (27). The unintended humor happens unexpectedly and suddenly while the intended humor happens when someone makes an effort to be funny. People of different ages and cultures can respond to different kinds of humor. Humor may affect people’s emotions and health conditions. What’s more, humor has great significance in people’s daily communication and interpersonal relationship, even though it is largely decided by personal taste, including cultural and educational background, context, religion, and so forth. Given that different humor can be affected by so many factors, related studies on it have been implemented from various perspectives. Among the scholars and researchers, Salvatore Attardo mentioned in Linguistic Theories of Humor that Plato was considered as the first theorist of humor (18), and thought that “the taxonomy presented by Cicero is the first attempt at a taxonomy of humor from a linguistic point of view” (28). Looking back in history, there were many theories relating to humor studies and attempting to define humor and find its social functions. Amongst humor studies, three famous theories cannot be ignored, i.e., Relief Theory, Superiority Theory, and Incongruity
According to John C. Meyer, each of the three theories “helps explain the creation of different aspects of humor, but each of them runs into issues and problems explaining rhetorical applications of humor” (310). However, no data show us which of these theories is most useful. But even so, they can be described as complementary mechanisms that can work together to create humor. From the perspective of Relief Theory, Moniek Buijzen and Patti M. Valkenburg stated in their article that “Relief Theory assumes that laughter and mirth result from a release of nervous energy” (147). Thus, Relief Theory believes that people laugh because their tensions need to be released. The Superiority Theory of humor can be traced back to the age of ancient Greek. This theory says that a person’s superiority usually comes from the witness of other people’s misfortunes which is also called schadenfreude. Seeing others in trouble or bad lucks improves onlookers’ superiority. The Incongruity Theory refers to behavior or language that is unexpected, causing the hearer to have a sense of incongruity and feel the expected pattern of expression is broken, which generates humorous effects. According to M.P. Mulder and A. Nijholt, “the incongruity theory is the most influential approach to the study of humor and laughter” (4).

Except for the three well-known theories mentioned above, some other studies concerning humor emerged such as Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH), General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), Computational-Neural Theory of Humor (CNTH), Ontic-Epistemic Theory of Humor (OETC) and so forth. Besides, Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), Relevance Theory, and Cooperation Principle have also been used in the analysis of humor by some scholars as well.
Humor, as an important part of daily communication, is rooted in specific cultures and communities. When translators try to translate humor in some texts, culturally opaque elements and some linguistic barriers make the translating process difficult and hard to continue. However, during the translating process, translators are expected not to reduce any meaning effect or equivalent reaction. To better reproduce the humor of different cultures, studies on translating humor are gaining more and more recognition and importance. Jeroen Vandaele stated that “humor translation is qualitatively different from ‘other types’ of translation and, consequently, one cannot write about humor translation in the same way one writes about other types of translation.” (150).

For translators, they often find themselves in a dilemma when translating humor from one language into another language. On the one hand, translators face the risk of leaving out information. On the other hand, translators might be forced to load too many explicatory footnotes into the text. Some scholars and translators believe that it is impossible to reproduce humor, especially the culture-specific ones, while others who hold positive views believe that some translation methods and approaches can help to reach the equivalence. Raphaelson-West divided jokes into three groups, including linguistic, cultural, and universal (310). Such a basic classification provides a foundation for researchers to analyze humor and its translation in a systematic way.

### 2.1.1 Humor in television works

It is widely recognized that humor can be regarded as an effective way of attracting audiences, and various comedies have gained great popularity and may largely enhance
the operation of many kinds of programs. Comic elements in advertisements are likely to be discussed and studied by companies and researchers. Besides, in some reality shows and entertainment programs, humor is always an indispensable part. Nowadays, fewer and fewer hosts will perform without telling jokes and use humorous expressions. For television works like these, humor can be a big selling point. Even in some serious programs like News channels, humor elements can be added appropriately to boost ratings. Joanne R. Cantor once analyzed related issues on humor in television and broadcasting. And the results of her studies showed that many of the situation comedies, most of the drama series, most of the news and information shows, and most of the sports programs and soap operas attempt to be humorous (Cantor 505-506). However, verbal and non-verbal humor are different from each other. In television works, the humorous effect is usually achieved by many factors such as sound (noise, background music, environment sound), vision (actor’s facial expressions and gestures), text (subtitling), and so forth. Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Aline Remael explained in the book *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling* about semiotic cohesion and the multimodality of language, which focuses on interactions between words and images, between speech and gestures (49-53). Delia Chiaro gave some translation strategies to verbal humor on screen in his book *Translation, Humor and the Media*, which includes “leaving the VEH (Verbally Expressed Humor) unchanged, replace the source VEH with a different instance of VEH in the TL, replace the source VEH with an idiomatic expression in the TL, and ignore the VEH altogether” (6-7). In addition, the book *Taboo Comedy: Television and Controversial Humor* discussed the taboo comedy and controversial
humor in television works, and the authors said that some television works “were saluted as groundbreaking shows because of – among other reasons- their unconventional, often-humors, and explicit treatment of subjects such as sex, death, homosexuality, and illness” (Roger Sabin et al. 1), and “forms of edgy, transgressive, dark, and even taboo humor have in the last few years increasingly become part and parcel of both television programming and the view experience” (Roger Sabin et al. 2).

2.1.2 Verbal and non-verbal humor translation

Non-verbal humor means different aspects (e.g., speech rate, multiple types of body language, and so forth) of wordless and comic forms of expressions. In Raskin’s book, he defines that non-verbal humor is “a humorous situation that is not created, described, and expressed by a text…even if a non-verbal situation is accompanied by a text but the text is just a component of the joke rather than its creator” (46). As for the verbal, it is a linguistic activity in that it involves at least one speaker and one hearer even though the teller and the audience may be the same person playing two different roles.

Whoever tried to translate humor from one language into another will understand that it is not an easy task. Translators usually encountered the seemingly great challenge when doing the translation of verbal humor. They often bear the responsibilities of preserving as much as possible of its original content and also reproducing a similar effect as the source language. From this perspective, translating verbal humor is not simply a matter of converting one language into the other. Delia Chiaro stated in his book *The Language of Jokes: analyzing verbal play* that “if two cultures possess
categories of jokes which play on similar subject matters—in other words if parts of both worlds somehow match—then it ought to follow that translating jokes into the two reciprocal languages should be a fairly easy task.” (78). That is if countries share similar traditions of jokes, translation of jokes would not be a hard issue. However, to make the hard and seemingly “untranslatable” humor and jokes translatable, Nida’s dynamic equivalence can be counted as one of the most popular principles used by many translators. Even though the loss of meaning and effect might be unavoidable, losses can be somehow mitigated. Lawrence Venuti in his article *Translating Humor: equivalence, compensation, discourse* explained the effectiveness of equivalence principle, “Equivalence can be useful in analyzing and evaluating translations only if we avoid understanding it as a one-to-one or univocal correspondence between the foreign and translated texts” (6). And he also brought out the idea of compensation and said that “because of the irreducible differences between languages and cultural traditions, translators often resort to various strategies to compensate for the losses that result from translation. Typical compensation is the insertion of a brief explanation for terms and allusions that are unfamiliar to the readership of the translation, especially those that are deeply rooted in the foreign culture” (8).

### 2.1.3 Entertainment trend in verbal humor translation

In 1.1, the definition of the entertainment trend in this paper has been given. And this phenomenon is also the result of the rapid development of the internet and entertainment industry. Adopting entertainment-oriented expressions in verbal humor
translation has the implication of attracting attention, often winning the affection, of the general public because such popular expressions bring them a sense of closeness. In spite of the popularity of using translations that follow the entertainment trend, the entertainment-oriented expressions can never be a panacea in that these trendy words themselves are short-lived. Besides, not everyone can appreciate the entertainment trend in the verbal humor translation, and not every audience like using online slangs and relevant popular expressions. Facing the phenomenon in the verbal humor translation of sitcom, some translators choose to be audience-oriented and use the functionalist approach so as to make the translation friendly and close to the target audiences. Those who have noticed this phenomenon started to analyze the translation following the entertainment trend and using the online slangs, buzzwords, and other popular expressions. For instance, Yang Qing stated that subtitling translation should base on the premise of translating purpose, and should also follow three rules including function-oriented, coherence, and faithfulness (20-21). Chen Chen summarized several translation strategies that commonly used to render the source text, including adapting online buzzwords, using celebrity-related words and expression, borrowing Chinese ancient poems and idioms, complete replacement of the source text (78-80).

2.2 Subtitling translation on verbal humor

Subtitling generally refers to non-video content such as dialogues in TV, movies, and stage works displayed in text form. Subtitling translation is interlingual and open, meaning the linguistic material of the source language is transformed into target
language subtitles. For subtitling itself, there exist some constraints and limitations. According to Jorge Diaz-Cintas and Aline Remael, “subtitling is constrained by the respect it owes to synchrony in these new translational parameters of image and sound, and time” (9). As for the functions of subtitles, we cannot ignore their educational, cultural significance. Many people, especially young people, gain various kinds of knowledge (e.g., culture, language, history, geography, and so on) through the translated or bilingual subtitles. Besides, subtitles play an important role in cultural exchange, helping people broaden their horizons and know more about other countries. Since subtitle translation can be regarded as a special form of translation research, corresponding translation strategies are also needed to solve the problem. In addition, in the aspect of humor translation in subtitles, some scholars argue that the subtitle plays an important role in both the reception and production of humor, and that role and the target audience’s ability to understand humor are critical to the translation of humorous exchanges.

2.3 Translation theories and strategies for translation of humorous lines

In translation studies, many theories and strategies have been proposed to solve various translation issues. As for the translation theories and strategies adopted by subtitling translation practitioners and professional translation researchers, the theories including the functionalist approach, equivalence, relevance theory, and others have been repeatedly used as the foundation of the analyses. Firstly, the functionalist approach proposed and developed by German functionalist school views translation as
a purposeful activity and this idea has provided a new perspective for translation studies. According to Du Xiaoyan’s article *A Brief Introduction of Skopos Theory*, the development of German functionalist translation has been categorized into four stages: Katharina Reiss and her ideas about the functionalist translation criticism; Hans J. Vermeer’s *Skopostheorie*; Justa Holz-Manttari’s theory of “translational action”; Christiane Nord’s notion of “Function plus Loyalty” (2190). In terms of equivalence theory, there are several representative theorists including Roman Jakobson, Eugene Nida, J.C. Catford, Mona Baker, and so forth. Among these theorists, Nida proposed two kinds of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on word-for-word translation and pays attention to faithfulness, while dynamic equivalence focuses on sense-for-sense translation. Catford’s theory on equivalence is different from that of Nida because Catford adopted a linguistic-based approach to translation, and Catford contributed to proposing ideas of “types” and “shifts” in translation studies. As for Relevance Theory, it was firstly proposed in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. They summed up the properties of verbal communication by calling it ostensive-inferential communication. In the aspect of the application, Relevance Theory has been used to study translation and interpretation strategies of various source materials, including advertisement, literature, education, science, subtitle, etc.

Based on different issues in the translation process, many translation strategies have been proposed to solve the problems. As mentioned above, Raphaelson-West put forward three groups of humor: linguistic, cultural, and universal. For humor at the
linguistic level, strategies such as homonymy, homography, and paronymy and others are adopted to change some elements and parts of the words so as to realize the similar humorous effect as the original one. Besides, puns, phonetics mix-ups, obscure words, rhetorical excursions and others are all applicable approaches to linguistic jokes. Among those linguistic humor, translation of puns has been carefully studied by Chang Nam Fung in his article *Politics and Poetics in Translation: Accounting for a Chinese Version of ‘Yes Prime Minister.’* And he divided possible translation strategies into nine main types: (i) pun into the same pun; (ii) pun into different pun; (iii) pun into related rhetorical device; (iv) pun into non-pun; (v) pun into zero; (vi) related rhetorical device into pun; (vii) non-pun into pun; (viii) zero into pun; (ix) extratextual gloss (257). As for humor at the cultural level, translators need the basic knowledge of the two-side cultures and the way the humor generated. When translating cultural humor, the translators need to add explanations, or make changes to reach a similar intended humorous effect. Chang Nam Fung also gave eight possible types of strategies to cope with the translation of Culture-Specific Items. Based on previous study of Aixelá, Chang conclude these strategies are: (i) linguistic (non-cultural) translation; (ii) extratextual gloss; (iii) intratextual gloss; (iv) limited universalization; (v) absolute universalization; (vi) naturalization; (vii) deletion; (viii) autonomous creation (“Politics and Poetics in Translation” 260). As for universal humor, it is neither based on clever tricks on linguistic properties nor on cultural conventions and norms lying behind the information of conversations. This kind of humor relates to jokes that can be generally appreciated by people in different cultures with diversified language competence. Thus,
what translators should do is to find the most accurate and effective way to reproduce the original humor in the target language so as to help target text receivers to acquire the humor in the most economical time.
Chapter 3 Theoretical foundation

With the rapid development of translation studies, more and more scholars devote themselves to exploring this area, contributing to the emergence of many translation theories. This chapter focuses on the theoretical foundation, i.e., theories used for writing this paper, and, specifically, German functionalist translation studies including Vermeer’s *Skopos-theorie* and Christiane Nord’s functionalist approach will be mainly introduced.

3.1 German functionalist translation studies

Since the middle of the 20th century, the concept of equivalence in translation has been heatedly discussed and attracted wide attention. According to Eugene Nida and Charles Taber, “translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message” (12). Nida firstly introduced dynamic equivalence theory to guide the translation of the Bible. Besides, many scholars paid attention to linguistic equivalence, focusing on the source text and preserving its characteristics in the target text. However, some disorders that appeared in such approaches brought the idea that there should be a new theory to analyze translation studies from an alternative lens. As Jeremy Munday said, “the 1970s and 1980s saw a move away from the static linguistic typologies of translation shifts and the emergence and flourishing in Germany of a functionalist and communicative approach to the analysis of translation” (111). Upon the introduction of functionalist
theory, shortcomings of the equivalence principle were noted by proposing that translation should emphasize the functions and purposes of translation practice. This theory has attracted the attention of many people and it has been proved to be a new and effective theoretical tool. Besides, it also shifted the analysis perspective from the source to the target text, and from the author to the target audiences. Xia Xiufang claimed that the functionalist theory is more scientific than the formalist theory in that it pays more attention to the contextual factors (1686). Christiane Nord stated that “functionalism makes use of descriptive methods to locate and compare the communicative norms and conventions valid in various culture communities” (2). Among German functionalist translation studies, Reiss, Vermeer, Holz-Manttari, and Nord are representatives who have contributed to boosting the influence of this school. In this chapter, Vermeer’s Skopostheorie and Nord’s theory will be emphatically introduced

3.2 Vermeer’s Skopostheorie and Nord’s functionalist approach

Originated in the 1970s to 1980s, the German functionalist approach shook off some traditional views to translation studies, i.e., word-for-word translation and literal equivalence, and brought out new methods and perspectives to study translation. Among German functionalist approaches, Skopostheorie proposed by Vermeer stood out as one principle admired by many translators. As Nord described in her book Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained, “According to Skopostheorie (the theory that applies the notion of Skopos to translation), the prime
principle determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action” (26). *Skopostheorie* requires translators to use the corresponding methods and strategies to realize the specific functions and purposes of the translation activities after the consultation with the commissioner. Besides, the rules of coherence and fidelity also need to be followed. Even though *Skopostheorie* won many acclamation and recognition, criticism over it has unavoidably appeared. The *Skopostheorie* has received criticism from the proponents of linguistics and equivalence based theories, who thought that holding the importance of the target text may result in a neglect of the source text. As an advocate of the German functionalist theory, Nord summarized the main contents of the German functionalist translation theories and the major representatives. Also, she developed and furthered the *Skopostheorie*, bring attention to such key aspects as translation brief, analyses of the source texts, translation functions and so forth. She also proposed the new idea of “Function plus loyalty” based on the previous *Skopostheorie*. As Nord stated, “loyalty commits the translator bilaterally to the source and the target sides. It must not be mixed up with fidelity or faithfulness, concepts that usually refer to a relationship holding between the source and the target text” (115). Different from fidelity rule, the loyalty principle emphasizes the translator’s responsibilities to not only the target audiences but also the source text author, which means that the intentions of the author should be considered. Nord’s idea brings the previous studies of the functionalist approach to translation to a higher stage. And Nord’s functionalist translation approach mentioned above will be applied as the
main translation theory to the analysis of the humorous line of the American sitcom in this paper.
Chapter 4 Corpus building

The American sitcom *Modern Family* was selected as the object of case study with the following considerations: the popularity of this sitcom; the theme of this work being close to real life; the widespread acceptance of this sitcom in mainland China; and the representativeness of its verbal humor. *Modern Family* depicts the daily life of a big family in USA, including Prichett’s family which has an American old man with his wife, his two children, and their respective families and children. The show addresses the changing social norms and culture throughout the 2010s. Since its introduction into China through various channels, it has been well received by the Chinese audiences. After ten years, *Modern Family* ushered in its final season: the eleventh. Different from other sitcoms, *Modern Family* adopts a film technique called mockumentary, that is, each character would sit in front of the camera from time to time and conduct character monologues in the form of an interview. The author selected from all the episodes of *Modern Family* and extracted the representative humorous lines and their bilingual subtitles to build a small English-Chinese bilingual corpus.

4.1 Corpus source

Bilingual subtitles are selected from a TV Subtitle Group called YYeTs (人人影视 People’s Television). The history of YYeTs Subtitle Group can be traced back to 2006, and it is one of the earliest and most influential online subtitle groups established in mainland China. In addition to providing bilingual subtitles for films and television
dramas on websites and apps, this subtitle group has also expanded its business scope and has cooperated with many well-known platforms and enterprises, including Alibaba Pictures, CCTV.com, Baidu, China daily and so on. Considering that there are multiple versions of bilingual subtitles for the sitcom *Modern Family*, the author looked for subtitles from various sources, and tried to find the most suitable one for analysis. 

In order to understand the preferences of Chinese audiences about the subtitles of American television works, the author distributed questionnaires to find out the most frequently used bilingual subtitles of American drama for Chinese audiences. The 212 valid responses of the questionnaire showed that 161 respondents, about 75.95% of the total, chose YYeTs as the first choice to be the bilingual subtitles when watching American television works (see Table 1). Therefore, the author selected the YYeTs Subtitle Group as the source of the corpus for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platforms</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
<th>proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YYeTs (人人影视)</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>75.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeiJuTT.tv (美剧天堂)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>44.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not use online platforms</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
4.2 Corpus collection and selection

After collecting the corpus, the author conducted a preliminary process of selection and divided the collected bilingual subtitles into three categories according to the basic classification for verbal humor: general, linguistic, and cultural level. As for the general verbal humor, it means the humor can be understood by people with any cultural and social background. As for the linguistic level, it is specifically divided into three aspects: phonetics, vocabulary, and context. In addition, culture-specific items and puns are involved in the aspect of vocabulary. As for the cultural humor of the scene, the cultural implication needs to be explained or the scene is adapted to convey a similar humorous effect. In the stage of analysis, the corpus will be further selected in order to find the most suitable and representative cases.
Chapter 5 Analysis and discussion

5.1 Synopsis and character features of *Modern Family*

*Modern Family* depicts the daily life of a big family in USA. The family has 12 members including Jay Pritchett, Jay’s wife Gloria, Jay’s two adult children Mitchell Pritchett and Claire Dunphy, and their respective families. The themes of this sitcom are spreading love, warmth, and power of family. The combination of old-young marriage, gay marriage, a full-time mother going back to career has the implications to break the stereotypes and traditions of previous television works.

Jay is a successful businessman in the closet industry. He has a strong personality who seldom shows his softness to others. However, he cares for his family as a listener and observer. Jay’s wife Gloria is a passionate Colombian woman who has a strong accent but she is always confident and kind. Manny is Gloria’s son from her previous marriage. Even though Manny comes as a kid, he is unexpectedly mature in thought and also respects the old traditions. Mitchell is a well-educated and diligent lawyer who is calm and decent. Unlike Mitchell, Cameron is a sensitive and emotional man who bears the responsibility to take care of their adopted daughter. But sometimes, Cameron can be protective for his family. Lily is the adopted Vietnamese daughter who speaks in a straightforward way, but she is kind and thoughtful for her family. Claire is a typical housewife, but when her father Jay decides to retire, she takes over the job and becomes the new boss. Claire is strict to herself, but she can also be a soft and funny mum. Claire’s husband Phil is a cool dad who always wants to be friends with his kids. The
eldest sister Haley is a popular kid at school, but she performs badly in the study. The younger sister Alex is academically outstanding and very resourceful, but she is socially awkward and desires to have friends and good relationships. Luke is the youngest kid in Claire’s family who is not so bright. But sometimes, he can be very sharp and talented in certain areas.

5.2 Analysis for verbal humor translation

This part analyzes the verbal humor translation in the subtitles of an American sitcom *Modern Family* and the translation strategies implemented to reproduce the humorous effects. The humorous lines can be cut into three levels including linguistic, cultural, and general. Among the linguistic level, three aspects involve pronunciation, vocabulary, and context. All of these humor translations are analyzed based on the principle of Nord’s functionalist approach, i.e. function plus loyalty.

5.2.1 Humor on linguistic level

In this part, three aspects are involved at the level of linguistics, i.e., pronunciation, vocabulary, and context. Specifically, in the aspect of vocabulary, it also includes pun and the Culture-Specific Item (CSI). To analyze the cases of humor translation in different aspects, the strategies to translate linguistic humor will be explored individually.
5.2.1.1 Pronunciation

Ex. (1)

Phil: Hi, Gloria. oh, what a beautiful dress.
Gloria: Ay, thank you, Phil.
Phil: Okay.
Claire: Oh, hey, Phil.
Claire: That's how she says "Phil." Not "feel." Phil.

菲尔：歌洛莉亚，你好，裙子真漂亮。
歌洛莉亚：谢谢你，菲尔[摸摸]。
菲尔：好吧。
克莱尔：菲尔。
克莱尔：她是叫你名字，不是要你去摸。

(Season 1, Episode 1)

Homonym refers to the word that is pronounced like another word, but they share different meanings. For example (1), the name of ‘Phil’ is pronounced like the verb ‘feel’, meaning to experience a particular feeling or emotion. Gloria has a strong accent, so she cannot pronounce rightly for some words. When Phil meets Gloria and praises for her beautiful dress, Gloria responds by saying thank you plus calling Phil’s name.
However, Phil wrongly thinks that it’s the Colombian passionate culture and Gloria wants him to “feel” her dress. Seeing Phil reach his hand to touch the dress of Gloria, Claire explains to Phil that what Gloria is saying is his name instead of allowing him to touch. Phil doesn’t consider the factor of the strong accent of Gloria, thus spontaneously misunderstanding Gloria’s intention. When Phil realizes the truth, he gets awkward and the humor appears. When translating the humorous expression, the translators chose to add the in-text explanation “摸摸” after the homonym so that the audiences can directly understand why this conversation is hilarious. By adopting an in-textual explanation, both Gloria’s communicative intention and Phil’s misunderstanding can be directly understood by the target audiences.

Ex. (2)

Mitchell: So, we've been dropping by unannounced to, you know, casually assess our candidates.

Cameron: Not all of our candidates.

Mitchell: No, t-that's true. We did not drop by Missour-ah.

Cameron: It's "Missouri". No one from Missouri would say "Missour-ah."

Mitchell: I'm so sorr-ah.

米奇尔：所以我们多方突击，以对所有人选进行评估。

卡梅伦：也不是“所有”啦。
米奇尔：这倒是，我们没去密苏雷。

卡梅伦：那念“密苏里”，真没见过自报家门还念错的。

米奇尔：多有失“雷”。

（Season 2, Episode 20）

For example (2), Mitchell and Cameron want to assess the whole family in case their daughter is left unattended when something bad happens to both of them. However, Mitchell doesn’t consider Cameron's family members in Missouri which makes Cameron feel unhappy. When the two are talking about this, Mitchell mispronounces “Missouri” as “Missourah” and then he is corrected by Cameron. After making an apology, Mitchell jokes again and deliberately misreads “sorry” as “sorr-ah”. When such mispronunciation and misspelling occurs, it triggers the laughter. When translating such mispronunciation, the strategy of transliteration is adopted, and the word “Missour-ah” is rendered into “密苏雷”. Because of the similarity between the correct and official translation “密苏里” and the wrong translation “密苏雷”, the target audiences can easily get what this word is really implied here. Also, the translation of “sorr-ah” into “失‘雷’” is an appropriate and funny one. 失‘雷’ sounds like “失礼” which bears the same meaning with “sorry”. Besides, “失雷” shares the same pronunciation as “失礼” in Cantonese which can be easily understood by target audiences as well. Using transliteration as the translation strategy can be a good method when the source pronunciation is similar or close to the target one. But it by no means always works in every translation concerning the mispronunciation and misspelling.
Teacher: I actually have some exercises that can help you.

Teacher: like Betty bought a bit of butter, but found the butter bitter.

Gloria: Betty bought a bit’a bootie, but da bootie bittah.

老师：其实我这里还有一些练习可以帮到你。

老师：比如炮兵怕把标兵碰，标兵怕碰炮兵炮。

歌洛莉亚：炮兵怕把飘兵蹦，标兵怕蹦抱兵抱。

(Season 8, Episode 04)

Gloria finds the younger son Joe has the problem of pronunciation, so she seeks the help of a professional teacher. However, the teacher notices that Gloria herself has a strong accent which might be the reason for affecting Joe’s pronunciation of English words, so she suggests that Gloria practices the pronunciation, too. For example (3), when the teacher leads Gloria to read the doggerel, Gloria still cannot pronounce right, thus generating the humorous effect. In the translation, the English doggerel was rendered into Chinese doggerel via the method of domestication. And the next mispronunciation was rendered according to the previous domesticated translation as well. In the source text, if the doggerel is rendered by literal translation it would lose
the humor and cannot resonate with the target audiences. By using the strategy of domestication, the target audiences can easily understand the humor.

5.2.1.2 Vocabulary

Ex. (4)

Phil: Ordinarily, I'm a rule follower.
Phil: But when someone tells me I can't bring my own snacks into their stadium.
Phil: That's when I get a little nuts.
Phil: It is a free country, right?
Phil: let's just say it ruffles me when some goobers tell me I have to spend half my payday on their hot dogs.

菲尔：通常，我是守规矩的人。
菲尔：但是如果有人不准我自带零食进体育馆。
菲尔：我就要生气[坚果]了。
菲尔：这是个自由的国家不是吗？
菲尔：这么说吧，让我不爽[薯片]的是某些蠢货[花生]叫我在发薪日[糖]花上半天在他们的热狗上。

(Season 1, Episode 24)
Polysemy is one important aspect of pun, meaning that one word has more than one meaning. When one word can be interpreted in several meanings in the sentence, the ambiguity can be created, thus generating the humorous effect. According to the context, Phil explains and makes excuses for his action of bringing snacks into the stadium. To make his excuses convincible, he uses polysemy and implies what snacks he brings with him. To translate polysemy, the translators used in-textual explanations and made the ambiguities clear inside the sentences so that the target audiences can directly and easily get why these expressions are funny. Inserting the in-textual explanations is useful when they are short and readable. But when the explanatory sentence is long, the in-textual method is no longer workable and may cause information loss.

Ex. (5)

Mitchell: Hey, are you guys okay?

Phil: Yeah, we're fine, you?

Mitchell: We're fine. That was really… oh, wait, hold on.

Mitchell (to Gloria): Hello?

Gloria: Mitch, are you okay?

Mitchell: We're okay, we're okay.

Gloria: And Phil and Claire?

Mitchell: uh, I'm on the other line with them right now. One second.

Mitchell: hello? Oh, shoot, we lost Phil.
Gloria: We lost Phil?!

Cameron (beside Mitchell): We lost Phil?

Gloria: Hello?

Mitchell (speak to himself): Great, now Gloria's gone.

Cameron: Gloria's gone, too?

米奇尔： 你们没事吧？
菲尔： 我们没事，你们呢？
米奇尔： 没事，那真是...稍等。
米奇尔（对歌洛莉亚说）：喂？
歌洛莉亚： 米奇，你们没事吧？
米奇尔： 没事，我们没事。
歌洛莉亚： 菲尔和克莱尔呢？
米奇尔： 我刚正跟他们通话呢，稍等。
米奇尔： 喂？ 见鬼，菲尔挂了。
歌洛莉亚： 菲尔挂了吗？
卡梅伦： 菲尔挂了？
歌洛莉亚： 喂？
米奇尔： 这可好，歌洛莉亚也没了。
卡梅伦： 歌洛莉亚也魂归西天了？

(Season 2, Episode 3)
This is a conversation that occurs on the phone. After the earthquake, the family members call each other to check if everyone is ok. However, the situation is chaotic, then there appear some misunderstandings because of the presence of pun: “lost” and “gone”. Originally, Mitchell and Phil are connected, and then Gloria calls Mitchell. When Mitchell gets back to speak to Phil, he finds that he has hung up the phone, so he says to himself that “we lost Phil”. As a result, uninformed Gloria misunderstands that Phil died in the earthquake. Gloria hangs up Mitchell's phone, and Mitchell says to himself again that “Gloria's gone”, which is misunderstood by the Cameron who is standing beside Mitchell and he thinks that Gloria also died in the earthquake. This chaotic situation and misunderstandings make the utterances hilarious. In the target culture, “挂” means both “hang up the phone” and “death”. So it is safe to literally translate “lost” and “gone” which originally meant someone “hangs up the phone” and “death” into “挂了” and “没了”. However, the last translation of “gone” uttered by Cameroon was translated into “魂归西天” because he misunderstood the meaning of “lost” and “gone” as “death” from the beginning to the end. In this example, the translation has successfully reproduced the humor effect of the original, and also realized the function and loyalty of the original text.

Ex. (6)

Gloria: You know what? Forget the pretty nails.
Gloria: We are all going to a Vietnamese restaurant, and we are gonna give her a taste of her culture.

Gloria: Which one is the best restaurant around here?

Cam: I wanna say Saigon.

Mitchell: There's a little, um…

Gloria: You know nothing. I'll look in the Jelp.

歌洛莉亚：要我说，我们就别去做什么指甲了。

歌洛莉亚：我们去找家越南菜馆，让她尝尝自己民族的文化。

歌洛莉亚：附近哪家越南菜馆最好？

卡梅伦：估计是西贡菜馆吧。

米奇尔：有家小店叫啥来着…

歌洛莉亚：你们一无所知。我查查大众点评。

(Season 4, Episode 19)

For example (4), Gloria says that Mitchel and Cameron don’t fulfill the responsibilities to let Lily know her own culture, which causes Lily to know nothing about her nation-Vietnam. When Gloria asks about the best Vietnamese restaurant nearby, Mitchell and Cameron cannot answer immediately. Then Gloria picks up her phone and checks it on “Jelp” which is a famous Western restaurant search application. In the translation, the translator adopted the strategy of domestication and naturalization to translate “Jelp” into China’s 大众点评 (Dianping) app, which is also an equivalent
and famous application for searching restaurants in mainland China. However, the original utterance is not so funny in itself, but this strategy of domestication makes the audience feel close and familiar, and also adds the humorous effects when the visual and auditory shock appear because the Western people use Chinese App. Using strategies such as domestication and naturalization are useful and effective for culture-specific items (CSI), and they can also generate the feeling of closeness to the receptors. But this method also bears the risk of compromising the original flavor and meaning, making the source language and culture more alienate for the target audiences.

Ex. (7)

Cam: What happened?

Mitchell: Oh, my god.

Mitchell: Stop. We're gancient.

卡梅伦：怎么了?

米奇尔：我的天。

米奇尔：别跳了，我们已经过时了。

(Season 6, Episode 10)

Cam and Mitchell are dancing in the gay bar. Unfortunately, they realize that they are too old to join the young people and become unpopular in the club. So Mitchell
combines the words “gay” and “ancient” together to illustrate the situation they are in. In the translation, the translators don’t translate literally because there is no equivalent in the target language, then in this translation, the strategy of free translation was adopted to convey the basic meaning of “out-of-fashion”. Even though the meaning has been conveyed fluently, the implication and feature of the compound new word have been compromised, so the translation loses the humorous effect when it is compared with the original text. To preserve the feature and humor of the combined word, the translation “同志已逝” is suggested to replace the old version “过时.” “同志已逝” is the combination of “同志” (gay) and “芳华已逝” (time has gone), and also makes it clear and easy for audiences to get the original meaning and realize the principle to be function-oriented. Besides, the original intention of the screenwriter has been realized because of the similar word-building. To translate such a hybrid word, on one hand, the translators need to consider the original features and implications of the author and to preserve and reproduce the humor as much as possible. On the other hand, the acceptability of the audiences towards such translations of new words should be taken into consideration as well.

5.2.1.3 Context

Ex. (8)

Claire: Hey, Dylan.
Dylan: Hey, Mrs. Dunphy.
Claire: I was wondering if we could have a little chat.
Dylan: Oh. You want me to go home.
Claire: No, no. it's the -the opposite of that.
Dylan: I want you to go home?

克莱尔：嘿，迪兰。
迪兰：你好呀，邓菲太太。
克莱尔：我们谈谈行吗？
迪兰：你想赶我走吧。
克莱尔：不是，与你想的正好相反。
迪兰：那就是“我想赶你走”？

(Season 3, Episode 1)

Haley persuades the family to take her boyfriend Dylan to have the vocation in another city with them, but the mother Claire is not happy with this decision and wants Dylan to leave. After talking with Phil, Claire comes to realize that she cannot be so impolite, so she decides to make an apology to Dylan. However, when she say that she means the opposite of “you want me to go home”, the audiences would naturally think the real meaning is “do not want me to go home”. But Dylan is a boy who is undereducated and not so bright, so he thinks the “opposite” is the alteration of the subject and the object-“I want you to go home”. The unexpected answer triggers the
humorous effect, and understanding this humor needs to refer to the context and the
tensions between Claire and Dylan. As for the translation, it is safe and informative
even to render them literally. By adopting literal translation, it would not lose the
humor and also keeps the implication of the stupidity of Dylan.

Ex. (9)

Gloria: Jay!

Jay: I'm up here.

Gloria: ay, Dios mio! Your time was too short.

Jay: I'm on the roof.

Gloria: ah. Oh, okay.

歌洛莉亚：杰!

杰：我在上面。

歌洛莉亚：我的天啊！天妒英才，英年早逝啊。

杰：我在屋顶。

歌洛莉亚：好的。

(Season 8, Episode 13)

Jay is repairing the roof but unfortunately, he finds himself cannot come down, so
he waits on the roof to be rescued. After a while, Gloria walks out and calls Jay’s
name but to hear the answer from above, so she makes a joke and implies that Jay is answering from the heaven, meaning he is dead. When Jay explains he is on the roof, Gloria withdraws her pretended sad emotion immediately and says “okay.” This example is funny because of the banter from Gloria based on the context. When translating this humor, the literal translation is good enough to render the meaning. In addition, the expression of “time was too short” was rendered naturally into “天妒英才，英年早逝” (the god is jealous of talent, so the talent dies at an early age). By translating into the Chinese idiom, the translation becomes more natural and familiar to the target audience.

5.2.2 Humor on cultural level

Humor can be cultural, and cultural humor requires audiences to have the basic knowledge to get the humorous effect. People in a different culture may not understand the humor because of the cultural barriers. To translate such humor can be very difficult and usually, translators choose to adapt the humor to similar ones in the target culture so as to convey the humorous effect. In this part, cultural humor in the sitcom Modern Family and the corresponding translation strategies to cultural humor would be analyzed.

Ex. (10)
Gloria: I thought that one of the advantages of marrying an older guy was that I was going to be able to relax.

Gloria: But all this swimming and running and rowing. It’s just like how some of my relatives got into this country.

歌洛莉亚：我以为嫁给一个老头的好处之一是生活能过的轻松点。
歌洛莉亚：可他又游泳又跑步又划船，简直跟我的同胞们偷渡来美国的过程差不多。

(Season 1, Episode 23)

Jay and his big family go out to enjoy their holiday. But when Jay gets a call from his brother and he suddenly realizes the importance of staying healthy, so he starts to do exercises during his holiday. A series of Jay’s sudden changes make his young wife Gloria feel uncomfortable and start to complain. What Gloria says in example (10) is funny because she connects the “swimming and running and rowing” to the way her relatives going into the USA. She says this in a self-mockery way and makes it humorous to the audiences. In another way, it implies the situation of Colombian people stealing into America and the poor living status of Colombian people. And to render this humor, the translators make the translation more explicit by using the method of amplification and adding the expression of “偷渡” (steal into another country) in the translation. If the translation was simply rendered by a literal translation into “这跟我同胞们来这个国家的方式一样”， it might make the target audience confused. By
making the meaning more explicit, the audiences can accurately understand the cultural implication inside the sentence and get the humorous effect.

Ex. (11)

Mitchell: Why did you dress her in jungle prints?

Cameron: Because I thought it would be cute!

Mitchell: She's gonna think she's back in Vietnam!

米奇尔：你干嘛要把她打扮成和丛林一个颜色？

卡梅伦：因为我觉得那样可爱！

米奇尔：她会感觉她又回到了越南。

(Season 1, Episode 23)

Cameron always likes to dress Lily and this time he dresses Lily in jungle prints which he thinks quite close to the theme of this holiday. However, when they enter into the forest, Lily runs away and her daddies cannot find her. Mitchell blames Cameron for dressing their daughter in green so that they cannot spot her easily in the jungle, and also, he blames for making Lily think she is in Vietnam, implying that Vietnam is a backward and underdeveloped place full of green plants and forest. Such humor can be literally translated to realize the function and reproduce the original intention of the
screenwriter, and most audiences need no additional effort to understand it in that they already know the backwardness of Vietnam.

Ex. (12)

Mitchell: Ah! That smells delicious, but nothing for me. I've got an early work lunch.

Jay: Really? I didn't hear an ambulance.

米奇尔：闻起来好香啊，可我不能吃了。有个很早的工作午餐。

杰：是吗？我没听到救护车的声音啊。

（extra-textual explanation added on the middle upper of the screen：[Ambulance chaser: 讽刺律师的无良 原意为律师追着救护车里的伤员 要求帮忙打官司}

（Season 3, Episode 14）

Mitchell’s house is under renovation, so they come to Jay’s house for a temporary stay. Anyway, Mitchell feels awkward when staying with his father, and Jay is insensitive to this fact and always makes fun of Mitchell. When Mitchell explains that he has to go and cannot have breakfast at home, Jay makes fun of Mitchell again by saying he is an “ambulance chaser”. Ambulance chaser refers to a lawyer soliciting for clients at a disaster site, and it implicates the stereotype of lawyers that follow the ambulance to find clients because they only care about money. Because this expression is culturally specific, when translating this sentence, the translators add an extra-textual
explanation to give the reference for target audiences. Generally, there exist two ways
to add an explanation on screen, i.e., in-textual explanation following the exact word or
expression, extra-textual explanation on the upper middle of the screen. In this example,
an “ambulance chaser” needs to be explained in a long sentence so that it is fine to add
the extra-textual explanation on the screen. Because of the spatial and time limitations,
some audiences who cannot read at a fast speed cannot get the explanatory information
and thus lose the humorous effect. Even though the translation has been rendered with
the purpose to reproduce the humor and the original intention of the screenwriter, it can
be more or less compromised because of the inherent constraints of the subtitle on the
screen and is also unfriendly to low-speed readers.

Ex. (13)

Lily: So, Larry's allowed to sit on the couch and I'm not?
Cameron: Well, Larry is white.
Lily: Hey, you chose me.
Cameron: Oh, uh, that's not what I meant.

莉莉：拉里可以坐在沙发上，而我不行吗？
卡梅伦：拉里是白色的[白人]。
莉莉：是你们选择的我。
卡梅伦：我不是那个意思。
Cameron and Mitchell bought a white couch and want to take it as an opportunity to let Lily know how to cherish things by not allowing her to sit on the couch when she is staying dirty. Lily is unsatisfied with this decision and argues that the white cat Larry can sit on the couch while she cannot. Cam explains that because Larry is white, meaning that Larry is in the same color as the couch. But Lily misunderstands it and thinks that Cam is saying she is a yellow race instead of white. To translate such humor, the in-textual explanation has been added to make it understandable for target audiences. Such translation has the advantage for target audiences to get the humor in a quick manner, but it also bears the risk of destroying the fluency of viewing experience. Adopting in-textual explanation in this translation can not only make the audience get the humor effect and fulfills the purpose of making the translation funny but also fulfill the racist implication that brought up by the original text of the screenwriter.

Ex. (14)

Jay: I’m getting a lifetime achievement award at this year’s Expo Internationale du Closet.

Gloria: Why don’t they translate the last word?

Gloria: I’m sure they have a word for closet.

Jay: They’re French. Maybe they went on strike before they got to the end.
Jay is invited to Paris to receive the lifetime achievement award at the International Closet Expo, and his whole family comes with him to witness the precious moment. When Gloria asks why the translation didn’t involve the last word, Jay answers by bantering the strike culture of France. In France, the strike movements happen from time to time, which becomes a stereotype of this country. To translate this sentence, the translators didn’t add any explanation but chose to translate literally and let the audiences come to aware of the humor themselves. When the cultural implication is noticed, the humor appears.

5.2.3 Humor on general level

Ex. (15)

Mitchell: Maybe she just-she can't fall asleep unless she feels a woman's shape.

Cameron: I guess that's possible.
Mitchell: So here.

米奇尔：也许离开女性柔软的怀抱，她就睡不着。

卡梅伦：有可能。

米奇尔：那你抱着她。

(Season 1, Episode 1)

When Mitchell and Cameron bring adopted daughter Lily back home, Lily cannot stop crying. So Mitchell guesses that maybe it is because Lily cannot feel the woman’s shape and let Cameron carry Lily, implying that Cameron is bodily plump just like a woman. This humorous effect appears when audiences connect the fact that Mitchell and Cameron are a gay couple and usually Cameron is considered as the female role. To translate such general humor, free translation has been adopted and “woman’s shape” has been rendered into “女性柔软的怀抱”, making it more natural and acceptable for target audiences. Such a strategy adopted realizes the purpose in a natural manner and also sticks to intention the original text.

Ex. (16)

Gloria: In my culture, men take great pride in doing physical labor.

Jay: I know, that's why I hire people from your culture.
Gloria asks Jay and Manny to finish the handwork together so as to cultivate Manny’s operational ability. However, Jay is used to directing people to work for him instead of using his own hands. So when Gloria asks him to do the work by adding the fact that Colombian men are proud of doing physical labor, his reply bears the implication that in US people don’t feel proud of doing physical labor and instead, he chooses to hire Colombian men to do the work. Besides, the conversation implies that Colombian people get into America by labor input. The humor in this dialogue lies in the unexpected answer uttered by Jay. As for this humor, the literal translation is enough to convey the humorous effect.

Ex. (17)

Phil: You drove a plane into my face.

Jay: You must have moved. I told you to stay still.

Phil: I didn't move.

Jay: Try not to talk. I want to make sure nothing's broken.
杰：肯定是你动了，我说了不许动的。

菲尔：人家才没动。

杰：闭嘴，我先检查一下飞机有没有坏。

(Season 1, Episode 3)

When Jay and Phil go out and fly the model plane, Jay drives the model plane into Phil’s face. Seeing Phil fall on the floor, Jay runs towards him. Normally speaking, audiences would think that Jay will ask Phil that if he is ok. However, the fact is that what Jay only cares about is the model plane, causing the humorous effect. To translate such humor, the translators render it almost literally but use the popular colloquial expression such as “爆头” which means burst one’s head, making it more natural to target receptors. In the translation, the humor has been transmitted smoothly and combining with the context, Jay’s unexpected answer has been faithfully translated which is loyal to what the author wants to express.

Ex. (18)

Phil: Gloria, look, you're a beautiful woman.

Phil: In fact, you're probably one of those beautiful women who doesn't even know it.

Gloria: No, I know it.

菲尔：歌洛莉亚，听着，你是个大美女。
菲爾：其實，你很有可能都不知道自己是美女。
歌洛莉亞：不，我知道的。

(Season 1, Episode 5)

After knowing that Claire once said that Gloria was a gold-digger, Gloria gets sad and Phil comes to calm and comfort her. When audiences’ general expectation of one answer meets the unexpected one, the humor effect occurs. So when Phil says that Gloria is beautiful and she might not know it. The confident Gloria replies by saying that she is aware of this fact and shows her absolute confidence. To translate such humor, the literal translation is good enough to convey the humorous effect.

This part analyzes the humorous lines in the sitcom and their translation strategies from linguistic, cultural, and general levels. In case studies, Nord’s functionalist approach have been used as the theoretical foundation. In the above analyses, most of the cases have considered this principle and have successfully reproduced the humor and at the same time, took the author’s intentions into consideration. To conclude the strategies in this part, the cases of linguistic humor, the aspect of pronunciation involves mainly the issues of homonym and mispronunciation, and the strategies adopted are adding the in-textual or extra-textual explanation, and transliteration. As for the aspect of vocabulary, the strategies to deal with pun and CSI are domestication, free translation, and use of explanations. Besides, the literal translation is usually used to render the humor in the specific context. When it comes to cultural humor, the cases are mainly
divided into several aspects, i.e., the humor translation without any reference, the humor rendered with more explicit translation, the humor translation with general cultural implication, the specific cultural humor translations with the explanation. To translate such cultural humor mentioned above, the translators implemented the strategies of adding explanation, amplification, literal translation. With regards to the general humor (as well as the universal humor), the strategies of literal and free translation are used the most.

5.3 Entertainment trend of verbal humor translation

Nowadays, the trend of entertainment in subtitle translation has been gaining wide popularity. Translators tend to translate the subtitles by using online slangs and buzzwords to make the target expressions more interesting and appealing. Also, popular and funny expressions help make audiences feel intimate and familiar to catch their attention and boost the audience rating. However, too much of the entertainment trend in subtitling might rub some audiences the wrong way and make them feel inappropriate and unsatisfied. To analyze the entertainment trend in the American sitcom, this part looks at the translations using online slangs and popular expressions to find out whether entertainment trend in translation always helps convey humorous effect.

5.3.1 Entertainment trend in Modern Family
Cameron: Get used to that jealousy, Lily.

Cameron: *Ordinary people just don't understand us.*

卡梅伦: 莉莉,要习惯被嫉妒。

卡梅伦: 燕雀安知鸿鹄之志哉。

*(Season 2, Episode 7)*

This conversation occurs when Cameron finds an opportunity for Lily to advertise a baby product, but Mitchell holds the opposite opinion and doesn’t want Lily to do the advertising. Cameron thinks that it is the jealousy of Mitchell that goes against such a decision. The translation uses a famous quotation in *Records of the Historian* (《史记》). Literally, this sentence “燕雀安知鸿鹄之志哉” means that a sparrow cannot understand the ambition of a swan, and it is usually quoted by people to describe a situation that others cannot understand them. Using this historical quotation bears the implication of culture export, and causes a feeling of shock visually in that a foreign people can say cultural and historical quotation in Chinese, which can generate the humor effect.

Ex. (20)
Cameron: I'm home.

Mitchell: Oh. Hey. Did you find Stella?

Cameron: Safe and sound. Mm.

卡梅伦：我回来了

米奇尔：你回来啦，找到斯黛拉了吗？

卡梅伦：完狗归赵。

（Season 3, Episode 4）

Jay’s dog Stella sneaks out of the house, and Gloria is very worried because Jay loves his dog so much. So Gloria asks Cameron who has a loud voice to help her find Stella. After the two finding Stella and Cameron getting back home, Mitchell asks if they find it and Cameron answers “safe and sound”. In the source text, “safe and sound” is an English idiom describing someone is still alive and unharmed. Normally, “safe and sound” can be translated into “安然无恙”. But in this translation, the translators use adaptation and render it by adapting a Chinese idiom “完璧归赵” (to return the jade intact to the State of Zhao), meaning that to return a thing intact to its owner. The translators replace “璧” (jade) with “狗” (dog “Stella”). Such adaptation combines the history with the modern, the cultural with the popular, causing the mixed feeling and add the humorous effect.

Ex. (21)
Claire: I'm not bored housewife.

Claire: No, I - I would kill for “bored”.

克莱尔：我才不是居里闲人。

克莱尔：我是想闲闲不下来呢。

(Season 3, Episode 5)

Claire is dissatisfied with the local councilor so she decides to join the new round of election and run for office. When she meets her opponent who is also the one she dislikes, the man calls Claire the bored housewife. To fight back, Claire says she is too busy to be bored. In the translation, the housewife has been originally translated into “居里夫人” (Madame Curie). However, the translators adapt “夫人” into “闲人” to suit the context and echo the term “bored”. In Chinese, 居里夫人 is literally used to describe the housewife staying at home instead of actually indicating the famous scientist Madame Curie. Using such adaptation makes it interesting and funny to target audiences.

Ex. (22)

Jay: Gloria, what happened to my hair?

Gloria: Ay, no, please. I cannot have this conversation again.
Gloria: Yes. Jay, time is cruel.

Jay: My Prince charming wig- it's gone.

杰：歌洛莉亚，我头发去哪了。

歌洛莉亚：拜托，咱们不说这行不？

歌洛莉亚：是的，杰，时间就是杀猪刀。

杰：我扮白马王子的假发，不见了。

(Season 6, Episode 6)

On Halloween, Jay dresses as Mr. Prince but cannot find the wig. When he asks Gloria, Gloria misunderstands that Jay is asking about his own hair. So she replies impatiently and sadly by saying the cruelty of time, implying Jay is too old and his hair falls out gradually. When rendering this humor, the translators use the online slang "时间是一把杀猪刀" (time is a butcher’s knife), meaning that people grow uglier when time goes by. By using such online slang, the target audiences feel familiar about this expression, thus generating the humorous effect.

Ex. (23)

Cameron: Oh, hey. How were the steps?

Mitchell: Oh…so… so great. So tough.

Mitchell: Uh, love the burn.
Mitchell lies to Cameron and says he was climbing stairs, but in fact, he was doing something else. When Mitchell answers Cameron, he pretends that he had the exercise and love the burn. In the translation, “love the burn” was rendered into “燃烧我的卡路里” (burn my calories), which is quite popular these days since it is a lyric from a popular song. By rendering this sentence into popular lyrics, the target audiences get the humor immediately by connecting the song and its popularity. Besides, the source sentence of “love the burn” is not so funny in itself. Through the translation, the humorous effect can be added and the conversation becomes more interesting to the target audiences.

5.3.2 Influence of entertainment trend in translating humor

Influenced by the cyberculture and entertainment industry, translation for English subtitles is noticed as having been following the entertainment trend to win the wide attention of Chinese audiences, especially of the group of young people. The presence of translation following entertainment trend also has an impact on traditional subtitling translation. Translators who seek audience ratings and profit tend to translate subtitles
by adapting the translation and using online slangs, buzzwords, popular expressions, and etc. However, many scholars hold that such adaptation goes against the nature of translation in that it loses the fidelity and faithfulness of the source text. In reality, such kind of phenomenon of using entertainment-oriented expressions is unpopular among many traditional scholars based on the fact that they think the AVT (Audiovisual Translation) itself already has constraints in space and time, “considering it as a type of adaptation rather than translation” (Díaz-Cintas & Aline 9). With the development of translation studies, scholars’ attention has been shifted from source text to the target text. By using adaptation and rewriting as the methods to translate subtitles with consideration of the limitations of space and time, the entertainment trend in humor subtitling has found its way to being nicely fitted and matched in nowadays’ subtitling translation. Even though the entertainment trend wins lots of popularity among audiences, the influence of such a phenomenon in translating humor is still unclear.

To find out how audiences think of the entertainment trend in humor translation and the influence of translating humor using entertainment-oriented expressions, a questionnaire has been issued on Q&A platforms, various universities’ chat groups, Sina Weibo, and etc. From April 20th to August 3rd, a total of 212 valid responses have been collected, among which 116 responses were submitted through mobile phone and 96 results were submitted via WeChat. As for entertainment trend in the American sitcom subtitling, 65.09% of respondents said they have noticed the phenomenon that there existed a small amount of entertainment-oriented expressions, 22.64% of respondents said there existed a large amount of such expressions, while only 4.25% of
the respondents chose that there were too many entertainment-oriented expressions, and only 8.02% of the respondents expressed that they did not notice any of this phenomenon (see Table 2). This result shows that the majority of respondents have noticed the entertainment trend in humor subtitling translation, and nowadays translating humor using online slangs, buzzwords, and so forth has been a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. When asked about what opinions the respondents have on entertainment trend in translation, 57.55% of the respondents thought that entertainment-oriented expressions should be appropriately utilized and controlled,

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
<th>proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found a small amount of entertainment-oriented expressions</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>65.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found a large amount of such expressions</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found too many entertainment-oriented expressions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not notice any of this phenomenon</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
28.3% of the respondents showed their support to the presence of such trend in subtitling translation, while only 12.74% of the respondents showed their opposition to it and only 1.41% of the respondents showed their indifference to such phenomenon (see Table 3). This result indicates that most of the people are not reluctant to entertainment trend in translation, and also shows the reasonability of the existence of entertainment-oriented expressions in humor translation. Despite the reasonability and feasibility of such a trend in translation, 12.74% of respondents believed that using

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
<th>proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment-oriented expressions should be appropriately utilized and controlled</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>57.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to the presence of entertainment trend in subtitling translation</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition to the presence of entertainment trend in subtitling translation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent to entertainment trend in subtitling translation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
buzzwords, online slangs, and other popular expressions would harm the view experience in that the unmatched and inappropriate wording makes audiences feel uncomfortable. However, most of the respondents think using entertainment-oriented expressions help add humor effect by making the audience feel intimate and familiar, realizing a tacit agreement for them to connect things happening around.

From the above statistics, we can conclude that more people feel positive than negative about adopting entertainment-oriented expressions in humor translation, and most respondents believe that such entertainment trend in humor translation needs more research and remains to be observed and they believe the amount of use of such expressions should be appropriately controlled. After looking at the opinions and attitudes of audiences about entertainment trends in translation, the author would like to ask another question: is it always better to use entertainment-oriented expressions to convey humor effect? To find the answer, the author has designed another questionnaire in which 10 video clips have been inserted for illustration. In each clip, literal translations have been added above certain Chinese subtitles where entertainment-oriented expressions have been used. As for the result of the questionnaire, the author took the average proportion of each choice as the analytical foundation. The results showed that more than 68% of the respondents thought that using entertainment-oriented expressions help improve the humorous effect, 15.75% of the respondents thought the entertainment-oriented expressions cannot improve the humorous effect. What’s more, 10.5% of the respondents said that whether these popular expressions are used or not, it shares the same effect with the faithful translation of conveying the
humor, and only 5.75% of the respondents expressed that no matter faithful translation or entertainment-oriented translation, they both cannot convey the humor (see Table 4). However, even though the entertainment trend in humor translation of subtitling has followed the pop culture and gained wide popularity, it cannot be arbitrarily with no regulation and rules. For translators, such translation using entertainment-oriented expressions still need to suit the function, be fluent in the target language, and faithful to the original texts. In addition, some online slangs and popular expressions are vulgar and impolite, which has a bad influence on children’s education. From this perspective, the censorship for such translation should be more carefully implemented.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>choices</th>
<th>Average proportion of 10 clips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment-oriented expressions help improve the humorous effect</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment-oriented expressions cannot improve the humorous effect</td>
<td>15.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal and entertainment-oriented translation share the same effect to convey humor</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal and entertainment-oriented translation both cannot convey humor</td>
<td>5.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Translating humor with consideration of idiolect

Due to cultural and linguistic barriers and the influence of cyberculture and entertainment trend, some translations for introduced Western sitcoms have formed a stereotypical and fixed trend, including using entertainment-oriented expressions to translate utterances of people with different personalities. And to cater to the target audiences’ taste and to seek profit, many translators incline to translate by using popular slangs, buzzwords, and other expressions that might make audiences feel intimate and familiar. However, different figures on television works have their own personalities and idiolect. To better show the individual personality, enrich the character images, and promote the development of the plot, the translators need to pay attention to these factors and translate with consideration of different characters’ distinctive idiolect s. In reality, the research on translation with consideration of idiolect in television works is still not in-depth, and many scholars have ignored such a phenomenon when studying on subtitle translation. This part studies the humor translation of the sitcom *Modern Family* from the perspective of translating with consideration of idiolect of different figures. Besides, in the section of 5.2 analysis for verbal humor translation, it is mentioned that Nord’s “function plus loyalty” cannot always be realized at the same time since that adaptation can sometimes be an inevitable choice when there exist inherent linguistic and cultural differences between source and target language. “Loyalty”, as we mentioned, can be understood as not too straying away from the original intentions of the author. In this paper, the principle of “function plus loyalty”
can be put into the aspect of translating humor with the consideration of idiolect and personality of different characters, which would be more compatible and be better utilized. Adopting the principle of “function plus loyalty”, the humor effect can be reproduced and each character’s image and personality created by the original author can be better understood.

Ex. (24)

Gloria: Ay! So handsome.
Manny: Thank you!
Gloria: Manny, are you wearing aftershave?
Manny: Yes, for my date.
Manny: This will be the first time she will ever smell me.

歌洛莉亚：哎呀，看上去真帅。
曼尼：谢谢。
歌洛莉亚：曼尼，你涂了须后水吗？
曼尼：是的，为了我的约会对象。
曼尼：这将是她第一次闻到我的雄性气息。

(Season 1, Episode 13)
Manny is an 11-year-old child and also an early-mature one. He always wants to be an attractive man, especially for woman, thus he talks like an adult who enjoys using poetic and beautiful terms for showing his elegance. So when translating the humor, the translators have taken the idiolect of Manny into consideration and translated the utterance “she will ever smell me” into “闻到我的雄性气息”. The mismatching of kid appearance and adult tone makes audiences feel distant and unfamiliar, shocking the viewing experience of audiences which causes the humor effects. And such translation with consideration of idiolect indicates that the translators have followed Nord’s functionalist approach and were loyal to screen writer’s intention to let audiences know that Manny’s idiolect and distinctive personality.

Ex. (25)

Mitchell: What's going on with you two?
Mitchell: Are you ... are you trying to get rid of me?
Jay: uh.. Mitch.
Mitchell: Oh my god, you are.
Mitchell: You're.. You're, like, in cahoots.
Cameron: Mitchell, I get scared, when you're around tools. honey, it's dangerous for you, for me, for.. our roses.

米奇尔：你们俩不对劲啊。
米奇尔：难道，是想把我甩开不成？

杰：呃，米奇。

米奇尔：天，你们真是嫌我碍事。

米奇尔：你们居然狼狈为奸。

卡梅伦：米奇尔，你一碰工具我就害怕。亲爱的，这太危险了，对你，对我，对我们的花花，都是威胁。

（Season 2, Episode 1）

Mitchell, Jay, and Cameron are making a dollhouse for Lily, but Mitchell is bad at handwork so that Jay and Cameron want to avoid cooperating with Mitchell. When Mitchell finally finds out the truth, he gets angry and eager to know the reason. Cameron explains that it is dangerous for Mitchell to do the work. When translating the “dangerous for ‘roses’”, the translators rendered it as “对我们的‘花花’都是威胁”。“花花” as the reduplicated word is traditionally used by people to indicate the femininity. For Mitchell and Cameron, they are a gay couple and usually regarded that one of them, Cameron, is performing feminine. In their daily life, Cameron sometimes acts as a female to look for the baby and takes care of family members which match the image of a housewife. Comparing to translate this sentence literally in Chinese as “玫瑰”，“花花” can be considered as the suitable and better one to render the humor and also, being loyal to screenwriter, convey the implication of the personality of this character by reproducing his idiolect.
Ex. (26)

Jay: What? Are you still mad at me?

Gloria: Yes. You have to apologize for making fun of my culture, my beliefs, my
chunchullo, my abuela.

杰：怎么，你还在生我的气。
歌洛莉亚：是，你要为取笑我滴文化，我滴信仰，我滴圈圈肉，我滴奶奶而道歉。

(Season 2, Episode 2)

Gloria has a strong accent in that she is a Colombian immigrant. Upon their
marriage, Jay’s family has become a place where American culture and Colombian
culture are mixing and conflicting. So sometimes, Gloria and Jay fight for the culture
shock and collision. In this case, Gloria is angry because she thinks that Jay doesn’t
respect her culture, so she asks Jay to apologize to her for making fun of her culture,
belief, and Colombian cuisine. When translating Gloria’s utterance, the translators have
paid attention to Gloria’s features of a strong accent and her personality, and translated
“my” into “我滴”．“滴” stands for the informal and nonstandard expression of “的”，
meaning the ownership of something. Translating “的” into “滴” gives direct
information to target audiences that Gloria has a strong accent and cannot pronounce
some words right. By translating this sentence using nonstandard expressions, the original idiolect is, to some extent, successfully reproduced.

Ex. (27)

Manny: Can I go golfing with you?
Jay: Well, I'm probably gonna have a Latino kid carry my clubs anyway.
Jay: Might as well be you.
Gloria: Fine! See what I care! Go!
Jay: Manny. Go change.
Manny: Sorry, mom. Hope you understand.

マン尼：我能跟你去打高尔夫吗？
杰：反正我也得找个抗球袋的拉丁裔小孩儿。
杰：肥水不流外人田。
歌洛莉亚：好吧，我才不在乎呢，去吧。
杰：曼尼，回去换衣服。
曼尼：对不起，老娘，您大人不记小人过。

（Season 2, Episode 3）

Manny, as mentioned above, is an early-mature child who talks in an adult way by using elegant and formal expressions. Besides, Manny pays attention to his language
and wording. The translation group translated “mom. Hope you understand” into “老娘，您大人不记小人过”. In this translation, “老娘” is quite a colloquial and informal expression to call one’s mother. And for Manny, “mom” can be better translated into “母亲” which is more formal and traditional to match the image and idiolect of Manny. Thus, with consideration of idiolect and context, the translation of “母亲” might be better in this sentence.

Ex. (28)

Phil: Hey, Alex. Honey, could you help me reset the router?

Phil: Oh, no.

菲尔：艾丽克斯，亲爱的你能帮我重启路由器吗？

菲尔：人家怕怕。

(Season 8, Episode 2)

After being locked into a small and dark house, it seems that Phil has the PTSD. When he finds something wrong with the router in the house but no one else there to help him get in the small space and find the router, he feels scared and petrified. He tries to call Alex to help him but no one answers, so he says that “oh, no”. The translation has been rendered into “人家怕怕”, implicating that Phil has the feature of femininity, and he is too scared to get in the small house. However, if the translation
was rendered into as simple as “噢，不要！”, it can convey the same implication that he is so worried and scared, and without implying he is somewhat feminine. The rendering of “人家怕怕” carries the effect of bringing humor in that it forms the comparison of Phil’s strong male body shape and soft feminine tone. But this translation also bears the responsibility to indicate the femininity of Phil. So it is necessary for translators to have careful consideration of the character’s personality, context, and idiolect.

This session talks about the translation of humor with consideration of the idiolect of different characters. Till now, related research on idiolect of humor translation is not sufficient and it is still a field that is worth further exploration. Nowadays, with the wide popularity of using online slangs and buzzwords to translate humor in American sitcoms, many translators don’t pay enough attention to different characters’ idiolects and choose to translate all humor in a stereotypical and fixed way which may result in the fatigue in viewing experience and aesthetics. According to Nord’s functionalist approach, when translating humor the translator is required not only to realize the function of reproducing the humor, but also be loyal to the author, i.e., the screenwriter, and to convey the original taste and intention of each utterance of different characters, which means that considering the idiolect when translating is of vital importance and is worthy of the attention.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the present research

Analysis in the present research can be mainly divided into three parts, i.e., analysis for verbal humor and translation strategies, analysis for entertainment trend in the translation of verbal humor, analysis for translating humor with consideration of different character’s personalities and idiolect. All these analyses are based on one American sitcom called *Modern Family*. In the past decades, scholars and researchers have done many related studies on verbal humor in television works. But when it comes to the translation of humor with consideration of idiolect of different character and influence of using entertainment-oriented expressions, they have been the areas that are not fully and deeply explored.

In the present research, it adopts the methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis and does the research based on the case studies and questionnaire survey. Analyses relating to verbal humor translation are implemented from the perspectives of Nord’s functionalist approach. According to the case studies and the result of questionnaires, it can be noticed that translations of verbal humor, which have been divided into three aspects, including linguistic, cultural and general, are rendered and realized through different translation strategies, such as translation plus adding explanation, amplification, transliteration, domestication, free translation, literal translation, and etc. And the principle of Nord’s “function plus loyalty” might be compromised because of the inherent differences existing at cultural and linguistic levels between the source and
target language. Based on the above analyses and discussions, it is safe to answer the research question (1) in section 1.3.1 that the functionalist approach is a pragmatic principle in guiding humor translation of subtitling in most cases.

As for the entertainment trend in the translation of humor, the responses of the questionnaires showed that more than 28% of the respondents showed their support to the entertainment trend in the translation of verbal humor in sitcoms, and around 13% of them showed their opposition to such trend in translating humor in television works while around the 58% said that the using of such expressions should be carefully considered and controlled (see Table 3). As for conveying humorous effect, around 68% of the respondents believed entertainment-oriented expressions help convey the humor better while about 16% of the respondents believed entertainment-oriented expressions cannot improve the humor transmission (see Table 4). Based on the above statistics, the tentative answer to the research question (2) in section 1.3.1 would be positive: the entertainment trend in translation always help convey the humorous effect.

When it comes to the translation of verbal humor with consideration of the idiolects of different characters, the truth can be noticed that many translator translate humor without considering different idiolect and even translate all humor using the same online slangs and buzzwords, and other stereotypical entertainment-oriented expressions. However, the author wants to point out that reasonability and necessity to consider the idiolect when translating humor in that it may not only realize the original screen writer’s intention to reproduce the specific character’s personality and idiolect but also reproduce the humor. According to the analyses of the cases in this sitcom, it
is noted that the translators have considered the factors of characters’ personalities in some translations but they didn’t form the consciousness to translate with consideration of idiolect in every case. So the idiolect still a part that requires attention. Based on the above analyses and conclusion, the answer to research question (3) in section 1.1.3 would be positive: idiolect is an essential part for translators to consider during the translating process, and from the cases of Modern Family, it is good to see that in some cases the translators have taken the personalities and idiolects of characters into consideration.

6.2 Limitations of the present research

As the author’s translation practice and the comprehension and studies on related translation theories need progress, this paper has some limitations in itself. First of all, even though related analysis and suggestions have been given, the applicability and practicability still need further research. In the analysis part, some compensational suggestions have been given, however, these suggestions still lack systematicity and pertinency. Secondly, as for the case selection, they are all from one American sitcom Modern Family, the analyses are based on just one television work, so the analysis and the data are not sufficient in both quantity and quality. Besides, the linguistic, cultural barriers are not so detailed classified and explored. Thirdly, even though strategies and theories are proposed to different humor translation, they are far from being matched and formulated as one panacea, and different cases should be analyzed according to individual context and circumstances. And analysis for subtitling in Modern Family is
by no means the norm of all subtitling translation studies. Fourthly, this paper only focuses on the translation of humorous lines from English to Chinese which indicates that it still lacks applicability for the related research focusing on more sources and target languages. Fifthly, when distributing the questionnaires, the respondent group is somewhat limited since the American sitcom is not a television work viewed by all walks of life and all ages of people. And the results collected from the respondents are also varied from the viewer’s personal preferences which can be constantly changing.

6.3 Suggestions for the further studies

Due to the author’s own insufficiency in academic research and other limitations, this paper is not sufficient and not scientific enough in general. However, the author believes that research on humor translation of subtitling in television works is of much importance and should be given more attention and research. In the future’s studies on the translation of verbal humor in television works, scholars and translators who might feel interested should improve their theoretical knowledge and extensively collect and study the research materials, deepen the research on translation of verbal humor of television works and corresponding compensational strategies, through which the universal and applicable suggestions could be proposed. Except for specific television work, more works should be listed as the research basis and be analyzed from more perspectives. Besides, comparative studies could be made between different translations to find out more differences.


Yang, Qing. *An Analysis of the Application of Chinese Internet Buzzwords in Subtitle Translation from the Perspective of Skopos Theory.* Diss. Fujian Normal University, 2016.
Notes

1. introduced by Victor Raskin, The Script-based Semantic Theory (SSTH) is the first theory stating its method as linguistic, which involves only verbal humor. The expansion of scripts goes farther beyond the definition of a word. They contain the speaker’s complete understanding of the concept that exists in his world.

2. The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) was proposed by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo in Script theory revis (it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model. It blended Raskin’s ideas of Script Opposition (SO) and furthered SSTH as one of six levels of independent Knowledge Resources (KRs) into the GTVH. These KRs could be used to model individual verbal jokes as well as analyze the degree of similarity or difference between them (223-226).

3. Computational-Neural Theory of Humor (CNTH) was proposed by Suslov in 1992. This theory lays equal importance on the humorous effect generated by linguistic means (verbal humor) and those by visually or by tickling.

4. The Ontic-Epistemic Theory of Humor (OETC) claims that laughter is a kind of reaction to a cognitive impasse, a temporary epistemological difficulty, in which the subject feels that social existence suddenly no longer seems real in any factual or normative sense.

5. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is a method of studying multiple modes of communication. It is also an approach of discursive analysis that not only studies
how various modes communicate, but also how they influence each other to produce symbolic meaning.

6. Relevance Theory, proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, indicates that “human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.” And based on this cognitive principle, Sperber and Wilson proposed a communicative principle of relevance, according to which — every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance (260).

7. Cooperation Principle was proposed by H.P. Grice in 1967. This principle describes how people get effective conversational communication in daily life. And the cooperation means the listeners and speakers act cooperatively and mutually to be understood each other in a specific way.

8. The information was retrieved on 3rd July, from the official website

http://allyingshi.com/fanyi/index.html


10. Link of questionnaire two: https://www.wenjuan.com/s/Yj2eIzA/