

Subtitling a Political Film: Linguistic and Ideological Transfer in *The Iron Lady* (2011)

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Abstract

This paper explores the linguistic and ideological transfer in the British film *The Iron Lady* (2011) from the official source of its Chinese subtitles. Taking the rhetorical approach used in the original political speeches by Margaret Thatcher as a starting point, the paper first provides an overview of her political stance and the comparison between British and Chinese political systems. Charteris-Black (2005) and Zhang's (2016) classification of political rhetoric are used to scientifically group the examples of Thatcher's political discourse in the film. Subsequently, it will use Díaz-Cintas's (2012) ideological manipulation in Audiovisual Translation and Lefevere's (2002) claim that translation is in whatever form a politically-loaded form in Translation Studies to testify the ideological representation of the Chinese subtitles in the case study. The back translation of the original subtitles could prove that the way in which linguistic and ideological values are translated depends not only on political asymmetries between these two countries but also on fundamental decisions. These decisions are multifaceted including the political context of China and its culture and the acceptance from the target audience. After considering the British political context and Chinese politics as a sub-context when subtitling British politics in this film, it is suggested that the translation of politics should be considered beyond its traditional linguistic sphere by focusing more on the rationale behind ideological motivation and manipulation and by contextualising them with a wider socio-cultural environment in the target text and for the target audience.

Key Words

Subtitling politics, Chinese and British politics, Margaret Thatcher, four-character idioms.



1. Introduction

This paper will explore how British and Chinese politics shape the subtitling practice in the film *The Iron Lady* (2011), looking particularly at the linguistic and ideological transfer in its sanctioned Chinese subtitles. The key questions are how the Chinese subtitles mediate the politics of the first female Prime Minister of the UK, Margaret Thatcher. Therefore, three key research questions are raised:

- (1) How does *The Iron Lady* cast light on the specificities of subtitling political discourse?
- (2) How do the subtitles translate the rhetoric and policies of Margaret Thatcher in a context of Chinese politics?
- (3) What factors influence the translation of *The Iron Lady* for a Chinese audience?

Specifically, the paper examines the mediation of the politics of Margaret Thatcher in the Chinese subtitles via the various rhetorical strategies used to render them. One of the key translation choices Chinese subtitles clearly offer is the four-character idioms known as “成语” (*chengyu*), which were widely used in Chinese classics and are still common in Chinese writing today. *Chengyu* stand out because they do not follow the usual grammatical structure and syntax of modern spoken Chinese. They are highly compact and aesthetic (Zhao et al. 2013, p. 2) and are used to denote Thatcher’s political stance in *The Iron Lady*.

The paper will subsequently draw on Jonathan Charteris-Black’s (2005, pp. 168-194) analysis of the different rhetorical structures which characterise political speech. Focusing on Charteris-Black’s analysis of the strategies key to Thatcher’s discourse, the paper will evaluate the way in which these strategies are or are not replicated by the Chinese subtitles. Charteris-Black’s analysis of Thatcher’s political rhetoric will be contrasted with Meifang Zhang’s (2016, p. 18) incisive study, *Political Discourse and Translation: Focusing on Translation of President Xi’s Public Addresses*, which is about the rhetorical structures which lie at the heart of Chinese President Xi’s major speeches in *The Governance of*

China.¹ When read together, Charteris-Black and Meifang Zhang offer a clear sense of the different political rhetorical contexts which the film's subtitles need to bridge.

2. *The Politics of Margaret Thatcher*

As the film *The Iron Lady* focuses on Margaret Thatcher and her politics, an overview of her politics is necessary for this paper. In office from 1979 to 1990, Margaret Thatcher was the longest serving Prime Minister of the Twentieth Century. One of the twentieth century's most famous and influential women, Thatcher came from a humble social background as a grocer's daughter to fight through class and gender barriers to make her voice heard in a male-dominated world (Blundell, 2008: 193). Andrew Marr (2007), the BBC political commentator, described her as "a one-woman revolution, a hurricane in human form, she would go on to transform Britain more radically than any prime minister since the Second World War". As Hugo Young suggests (1993, p. 604), Thatcher's governing ideology focused on the containment of communism and on maintaining freedom of citizenship by sustainable market-oriented business where individuals financially support themselves. In the realm of diplomacy, Thatcher was regarded as a powerful leader who could save Britain from its fate as the sick man of Europe (Gilmour, 1992: 37). She was seen as the key figure to restore Britain's position as a proud, self-confident and competent nation in the international arena. During the Falklands crisis, British troops, under her leadership, expelled Argentina's troops from the British Overseas Territory to proclaim full sovereignty. Her influential personal relations with Presidents Reagan of the USA and Gorbachev of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, were milestones along the road to the transformation of Britain's international standing (Seldon and Collings, 2000: 82-83). Thatcher is, as Riddell suggests (1991: 67), one of the most exceptional Conservative Prime Ministers in the twentieth century. Part of her success, as Seldon and Collings (2000: 66) suggest, stems from her fiscal policy which mastered the economic chaos by means of tax reform,

¹This book is a recent official publication compiling Xi Jinping's major addresses from November 15th, 2012, when he took office, to June 13th, 2014, including excerpts or full texts of speeches, talks, interviews, Communist Party instructions and correspondence (Zhang, 2016: 13).

privatisation and restriction of Trade Union power which, under her premiership, established long-term economic strength. Thatcher, though, remains a controversial figure. She radically disagreed with Europe and the European Exchange Rate Mechanism to centralise Europe which caused severe disputes with the rest of the world (Seldon and Collings 2000, p. 59). Geoffrey Howe, the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, disparaged Thatcher's European stance as: "It is rather like sending your opening batsmen to crease, only for them to find, the moment the first balls are bowled, that their bats have been broken before the game by the team captain" (Bryant 2012, p. 1). His later resignation was a fatal attack on Thatcher's premiership (Bryant 2012, p. 1). Moreover, in a home context many of her economic and social policies prove highly controversial.

*3. Why Release and Subtitle *The Iron Lady* in China*

Despite Thatcher's increased visibility in a Chinese context, *The Iron Lady* remains an unusual choice for the Chinese authorities to release and subtitle. It is a strange choice for the Chinese market/government to subtitle a film on Margaret Thatcher because British-Chinese relations have often been strained. Moreover, while Thatcher's involvement in negotiations over Hong Kong made her more visible than most British Prime Ministers in China, she was still a comparatively unknown political figure in China at large. Furthermore, China's tradition of female leaders is not a strong one. In addition, the political systems of China and Great Britain might easily be seen as antithetical. China is a Communist country, an ideology traditionally associated with left-wing philosophies and principles. As a one-party-state organisation, the PRC operates a high degree of control over people's lives, public services and investments, and infrastructures (Kolenda, 1990: 202). Power is highly centralised and state control strong (Edin, 2005: 1-2). This regime has been in existence in slightly varying forms since the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949 (Lü, 2000: 4). In ideological and political terms, Thatcher's regime and beliefs contrast starkly with the Chinese regime of her era. In contrast to China's single party state, the British system has a multiplicity of very different parties which are democratically elected (Beloff and Peele, 1985: 146). Her particular brand of Conservatism favoured a free market approach to public services and involved the sale of publicly owned industry and utilities (Hall and Jacques, 1983: 3). Her government pursued a programme of economic liberalism which runs counter to Chinese economic models.

However, while there are many reasons why *The Iron Lady* represents an unusual choice for the Chinese authorities to release and subtitle, there are interesting points of convergence between the film and Chinese culture. Aspects of Thatcher's leadership style might be argued to resonate in a Chinese context. A politician who carefully constructed and defended her power base, Thatcher was a comparatively authoritarian figure in British history, albeit functioning in a democratic system. She moved decisively to crush opposition to her policies by attacking the power of Trade Unions. *The Iron Lady* film depicts an authoritative figure who might echo aspects of Chinese values, who was comprehensively portrayed as a leader and a woman who was a "passionate patriot, an instinctive economist, a lifelong student and a highly practical politician" (O'Sullivan, 2013: 10). She built up a powerful political identity and at the same time crushed opposition as well. Moreover, the release of *The Iron Lady* in subtitled form might be seen to tap into a nascent trend for female political leaders in China. Keith Richburg (2012) points out that women are officially equal but politically underrepresented in China. According to the statistics from the party's Organisation Department, merely eleven percent of officials are female at the minister level or above (Richburg, 2012). Such figures appear to confirm Geert Hofstede's (1984: 209) affirmation that men command in Chinese society. However, as the first female Prime Minister in the UK, Margaret Thatcher's tough leadership challenged gender stereotypes and assumptions. She might usefully therefore be seen as a precursor to the China's "Iron Lady", Wu Yi, who headed the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation from 1991 to 1998 and was promoted to Vice Premier in 2003 (Hsiung, 1995: 582). Wu Yi is renowned for her bold and decisive leadership, for example, when she negotiated Sino-Japanese relationship. Her visit to Japan in 2005 represented a key milestone in the improvement of relations between these two countries (Wan, 2006: 17).

Moreover, however strained the relationship between China and the UK got in relation to the handover of Hong Kong, strong ties continued to bind the two nations. As David Crane (1981: 227) points out, trade was the foundation for links between China and the UK from the time of the Opium Wars. Moreover, cultural and artistic exchanges in the Sino-British relationship developed from 1978 (Meissner, 2002: 186). As part of this reform, China strengthened its relationship with the outside world (Zhenggang, 2008). During the opening-up period, Chinese people were given more opportunities to have a closer experience of foreign cultures, especially via films which are relatively convenient and simple ways for the public to know more about the outside

world. Links between the two countries were forged by agreements such as the Educational and Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed by both nations in London in 1979, along with scientific exchange programs held every two years. Though from 1972 to 1979, only ten joint projects were completed between China and the UK, the amount increased to 72 in 1986. The projects included film weeks, retrospective film exhibitions, collaborations in the areas of drama, fine art, publication, photography, education, library science and gardening (Meissner, 2002: 186). The cooperation set a solid foundation for building up Sino-British diplomacy. The UK and China moreover were able to overcome in part the hurdle that Hong Kong represented in their relationship as China adopted a “一国两制” / “One Country, Two Systems” policy which recognised the capitalist system in Hong Kong and Macao as different from mainland China’s Communism. The relations between the UK and China have been maintained therefore in comparative closeness since 1979 (O’Sullivan, 2013: 10).

Therefore, while there are stark reasons which make the release of *The Iron Lady* in China an unexpected choice (the starkly different political systems and the sensitive debate over Hong Kong), the Chinese authorities’ decision to release this film is understandable in key ways. *The Iron Lady* offers a vision of a leader cultivating a strong power base and crushing opposition. It taps into China’s small but growing trend for female leaders. Moreover, it can be read as part and parcel of China’s opening-up policy as it allows a glimpse of a foreign world which nonetheless resonates in part with Chinese domestic politics. The subtitled film therefore is a product shaped by both the UK politics of Thatcher and the politics of its targeted Chinese culture.

3.1. Reception of the Film in China

In some ways, the film’s reception in China bears out some of the arguments made above in relation to the Chinese government’s decision to release the film. The film was chosen for release in China on International Women’s Day on the 8th March, 2012, one year later than its original release. This film was deliberately realised on a day in celebration of women (Zhao and Song, 2013). The selection of this film for Chinese release is an unusual one given the divergent political systems of China and the UK. *The Iron Lady* was not as successful as blockbusters like *Transformers* (2007), *Avatar* (2009), and *Titanic 3D* (2012), etc. in the Chinese market. At the box office, *The Iron Lady* earned merely 4 million RMB, far less than *The Hobbit* (2012) and *Upside Down* (2012)

which earned 290 million RMB and 42 million RMB respectively. The main reason for this low revenue is that *The Iron Lady* was a comparatively low-cost political film (Lu, 2013). The critic Lei Sun suggests that the film was not commercially successful for two reasons: Firstly, the audiences in the cinema were mainly youngsters who were inclined to watch thrilling action films and were influenced by Hollywood films. Consequently, they lacked the patience for the low-cost art films. Secondly, there was also a regional disparity in viewing figures between big cities like Beijing and Shanghai and more rural areas (Lu, 2013). Comparing its box office returns with those of other political films released in the Chinese market such as *Lincoln* (2012), it was less fortunate in terms of its popularity and revenue in China than *The Iron Lady*. Due to its lengthy and boring dialogues, along with a relatively large number of Chinese audiences' unfamiliarity with American politics and history, it may cast challenges for Chinese viewers to appreciate this film. Based on this assumption, its box office revenue would not be promising. In reality, only its DVD form is released to the Chinese market (Wang and Dong, 2013). The chief executive Haifang Fu from the Xingguang Theatre Chain in Zhejiang underlines that low-cost films with a focus on content without vivid visual effects may not meet the Chinese audiences' preference for commercial films (Lu, 2013).

This biographical film summarises Thatcher's political career and records her life from childhood to premiership which makes it a political film. The film is constructed around key political events such as the Miners' Strike and the Falklands War, etc. Specific reviews described *The Iron Lady* as a strangely de-politicised portrait of the UK's first female Prime Minister by over-focusing on her mental health problems in late life (Rotten Tomatoes, 2012). However, *The Iron Lady* was perhaps not as successful at the box office in the UK as some of its big budget, special-effect competitors, as it is still clearly a low-cost political film. The fact remains that the film is built around key historic events in a UK political context. The subtitlers thus have to translate for a contemporary Chinese audience both the language of the source film and its politics.

Interestingly, from the outset, the subtitled version of *The Iron Lady* was clearly intended to talk to and resonate with contemporary Chinese culture and politics. This film about a powerful woman, Iron Lady, plays upon Thatcher's strength and her breaking of boundaries. Thatcher's nickname, "The Iron Lady" was given by a Soviet journalist, Captain Yuri Gavrillov in 1976 in the newspaper *Red Star* because of her opposition to the Soviet Union and socialism (Thatcher, 1976). Paradoxically, this critical nickname from a

Communist state was redeployed by another communist state, China, in a more positive context. The Chinese subtitles maintain the tough *Iron* reference but render *Lady* as “娘子” (“wife”). They choose the more formal and archaic word to depict a caring wife (Chen, 2013). The Chinese subtitles thus match the respectful tone of the original while belittling her identity as a political leader by referring to her marital status.

4. *Theoretical Framework*

Having elaborated on the film in both the British and Chinese contexts, this section will draw on key theoretical elements to explore how the subtitling transfers the politics of Margaret Thatcher for Chinese audiences whilst taking account of Chinese politics as a subtext. There is a clear political divide between Thatcher’s Conservative UK and contemporary Communist China. According to Friedrich Schleiermacher (Lianeri, 2002: 5), there is always a cultural and linguistic gap between the source text and the target culture for which one translates. It is, he argues, the job of the translator to bridge this gap. As their source film is clearly a work on UK political history, the subtitles cannot entirely domesticate the political; neither can they foreignise them entirely, for the cultural and political gap between source and target culture is too great. The challenges the subtitlers thus face are huge. Using the analysis of UK and Chinese political rhetorical structures offered by the works of Jonathan Charteris-Black (2005) and Meifang Zhang (2016) as an effective solution to read those differences between the UK and China, this paper will underline the breadth of this political gap in linguistic and cultural terms before considering how the subtitles bridge it.

Jonathan Charteris-Black in his book *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*, suggests that there are common rhetorical tropes or features to Margaret Thatcher’s speeches (Charteris-Black, 2005: 169). These metaphors can be classified into groups based on the targets of Margaret Thatcher’s imagined enemies: “the political opposition of the Labour Party; the social and economic problems of inflation, unemployment and crime and specific groups in society such as trade unions and the police. Finally, come a range of abstractions including private enterprise, Western civilisation, socialism, freedom, terrorism, markets, heritage, etc.” (Charteris-Black, 2005: 169-170). The film echoes these conflict metaphors throughout and the subtitlers have to

choose what to do with these recurrent tropes of conflicts in the Chinese context.

This paper will also work with the compelling analysis of Meifang Zhang (2016) as she contemplates the core rhetorical strategies of Chinese President Xi Jinping. Meifang Zhang (2016: 18) argues that Chinese President Xi Jinping's choice of metaphor is essential to his persuasiveness, and she classifies his metaphors into two types: correlational metaphors and intertextual metaphors. Correlational metaphors are closely associated with Thatcher's political stance metaphors that relate to metaphors that "project the feature of our physical experience onto abstract domains by means of image schemata" (Zhang, 2016: 19). Moreover, to make President Xi's speech impressive, other linguistic means are also employed, including parallelism, repetition and contrast (Zhang, 2016: 8; Charteris-Black, 2005: 181-182). This suggests that there may be common structures which link source culture and target culture despite the very different political systems.

Charteris-Black and Meifang Zhang make for compelling reading when read in association as they underline that there are innate rhetorical structures in British and Chinese speeches by these political leaders, structures which are perhaps reflective of their political contexts. Both Charteris-Black and Zhang's rhetorical strategies will use to classify the examples characterise the key features of Thatcher's political discourses. What follows next is applying Translation theories, in particular Audiovisual Translation theories, to read the Chinese subtitles. Translation theorist André Lefevere (2002: 10) argues that translation in whatever form is always a politically-loaded act, driven by the politics of a culture. As the subtitles of *The Iron Lady* make clear, there are linguistic and ideological considerations which are not encompassed by Charteris-Black and Zhang's rhetorical approaches. This paper will consequently adopt theories on politics from André Lefevere (2002: 8) that translators operate under the constraints of the cultures in which they work. Translators have the freedom to challenge the discourses featured by these constraints, but they may also be hemmed in by them (Lefevere 2002: 9). Translation manipulates texts in the service of power and politics. It may either impair or reinforce the prevailing ideologies (Lefevere 2002: 10). This paper therefore reflects varied ideologies in Chinese and UK politics behind the lines and on the subtitles. It will stress that the analysis of politics in the subtitles of *The Iron Lady* is multifaceted. The film is clearly a political film and its politics must be mediated by the subtitles. Therefore, following Lefevere's theories, the

subtitles themselves are influenced and shaped by their contemporary Chinese political context.

Seen from this angle, Díaz-Cintas argues, translating audiovisual material forces subtitlers to rethink the powerful, ideological transmission embedded in the audio and visual channels of audiovisual content (Díaz-Cintas, 2012: 281). Not only the factual information, but also the political assumptions, moral values, commonplace and stereotypes need to take into careful account in the transference from source language and culture to target language and culture. Therefore, the role of subtitlers shifts from a mere transmitters of information to the active agents participating in the shaping of ideological discourse from one culture to another (Díaz-Cintas, 2012: 283). As in the case of *The Iron Lady*, translation is not carried out in a vacuum, but undertakes under a certain degree of subjectivity and bias on the part of the target culture's politics as a sub-context involved in the translational process. However, research directly relating to Chinese subtitling practice in relation to the ideological manipulation has so far attracted little attention. Among the few, Wang (2014: 206), suggests a transformation from fansubbing group to a sanctioned provider of translation services where official subtitlers collaboratively work with fansubbers to contribute more viewer-friendly subtitled products. This is because the Chinese government still plays an dominant role in deciding and controlling the viewing habits of Chinese audiences via strict censorship, which inevitably leads to viewers' countermeasures to resort to illegal downloading and pirated products (Wang, 2014: 206). Though most of the young Chinese audiences call for more liberal media industry policies, this film's subtitles are relatively neutral with respect to the linguistic and ideological transference from the UK to modern China. Catchy Chinese four-character idioms are frequently adopted to replicate the high and elegant register used in political discourse, almost without deliberate falsification, fabrication and refusal of information heard from the original dialogues or seen from the screen. In terms to the subtitling strategies employed to make the linguistic and ideological transfer, Yu (2015: 493) proposed two of the frequently used methods – standardisation and simplification. While standardisation, the standard transfer of the text mode from oral speech to written text, is frequently used in the Chinese subtitling practice, more dynamic strategies adopted will be illustrated through specific examples in this case study film.

5. Case Analysis

Jonathan Charteris-Black suggests that in Margaret Thatcher's speeches during the period of 1977 to 1987², the metaphors of conflict dominate. Margaret Thatcher evokes negative associations in her evaluation of these opponents (Charteris-Black, 2005: 176-177). The conflict metaphor, therefore, encourages a transfer of evaluations in the political discourse of Margaret Thatcher. Since relatively little has been written on subtitling political discourse between the UK and China from the perspective of different rhetorical strategies, this paper will use Charteris-Black's conflict metaphors as an initial point of analysis by means of which to approach the Chinese subtitles of *The Iron Lady*, in particular Thatcher's speeches. It will also use Zhang's structural analysis of the rhetorical construction of Chinese President Xi Jinping in order to assess whether there are rhetorical overlaps and symmetries between the political speeches of these two key leaders from the UK and China. Drawing on Charteris-Black's conflict metaphor and Charteris-Black and Zhang's rhetorical analysis of parallelism and contrast, this paper will structure itself around five distinct areas. It will analyse how the subtitles translate Thatcher's use of metaphors of household management, metaphors relating to her role as a female leader, metaphors of terrorism, metaphors relating to trade unions, and finally metaphors applied to Thatcher's political opponents.

5.1. Metaphors of Household Management

Interestingly, as Charteris-Black (2005: 191-192) points out, metaphors of household management are frequent in Thatcher's political discourse. Capitalising on her position as a woman, Thatcher's discourse makes a virtue of female control of family finances (Charteris-Black, 2005: 191-192). The Chinese subtitles echo these metaphors of household management, using them as Thatcher does to align the financial decisions of government with those made by wives and mothers in the home. The subtitles on this area of metaphor underline the clear cultural equivalence which is possible in this area.

² Charteris-Black argues that the reason for the choice of this decade is because this was when Thatcher's rhetoric was at its most persuasive in terms of political success (2005: 168).

Example 1: Good Housekeeping

(1)Description of Scene: Thatcher argues with another politician in relation to the importance of household management and compares this with financial decisions of government.

(2)Line:

MARGARET: I know much more than those who have never lived on a limited income.

Just like the man or woman on the street, when I am short one week...

I have to make economies the next.

POLITICIAN: *Nothing like a slice of fiscal responsibility.*

THATCHER: *A man might call it fiscal responsibility.*

A woman might call it good housekeeping.

(3)Translation: 相对于从不知收入拮据意味的人 我更了解那样的生活

正如街上的男男女女 如果某一周 我手头拮据

那意味着下一周节衣缩食

-这和财政削减还扯不上关系

-对男人而已 可能是财政紧缩 对女人而已 就是持家

有道

(4)Back Translation:

MARGARET: *Compared to people who have never lived on a limited income I know*

more about that life

Just like men and women on the street if one random week I

am

hard up for money (to have no physical money in one's physical

hand)

That means next week I economise in food and clothes

POLITICIAN: *This does nothing with financial reduction*

THATCHER: *For men perhaps mean financial reduction*

For women definitely mean managing family affairs methodically

The original film's dialogue takes a clear and gendered approach to language and policy. Thatcher uses everyday language to describe her chosen economic approach. She talks about being "short" and needing "to make economies". Her speech aligns herself with everyday working-class people. The male politician's speech is of a different, more elevated and abstract discourse. He talks of "fiscal responsibility". The Chinese subtitles maintain this gendered

linguistic difference. The Chinese subtitles to Thatcher's speech are highly corporeal / they refer to women being “手头拮据”/ “to be hard up for money” (to have no physical money in one's physical hand) (*C-E Dictionary*). In this way, they reflect Zhang's (2016: 19) suggestion that physical “correlational metaphors” are frequent in the Chinese political discourse of President Xi Jinping and the context in which he works. And in fact, they personalise and make Thatcher's speech even more physical. While Thatcher talks of “making economies”, the Chinese subtitles detail the nature of those economies, “节衣缩食”/ “to economise in food and clothes” (*C-E Dictionary*). Again the contrast between the subtitled female speech and the male character is clear. The Chinese subtitles echo the abstract approach of the male politician, translating “fiscal responsibility” as “财政削减”/ “financial reduction”. Interestingly though, the Chinese subtitles elevate Thatcher's speech, marking it as more formal in style than the male politician as Thatcher's speech in Chinese contains three different four-character idiom phrases as highlighted in the above texts. These phrases stand out both structurally and rhetorically and mark Thatcher as a politician with key and catchy tropes.

To summarise, while there are common themes to the subtitles' translation of these metaphors of home management, so too are there differences in relation to Thatcher's speech on good housekeeping. The subtitles maintain the difference between female bodily language and male abstract economies, but they amplify and mark Thatcher's speech as catchy politics via the use of the four-character Chinese idioms. In light of this, gendered approach and UK politics are portrayed in the Chinese subtitles, conceived through the lens of Chinese idiomatic expressions and. The application of domestication proves that subtitling act is used as a tool for local empowerment (Díaz-Cintas, 2012: 279) where the domestic, idiomatic expressions such as Chinese four-character idioms are foregrounded in the translational process.

5.2. Metaphors of Female Leadership

According to Charteris-Black (2005: 191), Thatcher, was particularly keen to exploit any opportunity to stress the central role women could play. Images and metaphors of feminine strength are thus abundant. In *The Iron Lady*, the heroine, a strong and decisive female leader, clearly fits into this category. This section will consider both the nature of these images of female power and how they are translated into a Chinese context.

Example 2: Chambermaid

(1)Description of Scene: The Leader of the Conservatives, Margaret Thatcher, is persuaded to run for the post of Prime Minister by her two spokesmen.

(2)Line: MARGARET: It's all very well to talk about changing my voice, Mr. Reece, but for some of my colleagues to imagine me as their leader...

*would be like imagining, I don't know,
being led into battle by their chambermaid.*

It's my background, and my sex.

No matter how hard I've tried,

and I have tried to fit in, I will never be truly one of them.

(3)Translation: 对于我嗓音改变的提议 确实很好 但瑞斯先生

对我的同僚而言 要将我视为领袖...

就好比是 怎么说呢

让家庭主妇带领着去战斗

我的背景还有性别

无论我如何努力 我也确实努力了

努力去融入 但请相信 我永远无法真正成为其中一员

(4)Back Translation:

MARGARET: As for the suggestion of changing my voice indeed very good but Sir Ruisi

For my colleague imaging me as leader...

It is like how to say

Leading by housewife to battle

my background and gender

no matter how hard I try I do try hard

trying hard to fit in but please believe I have never truly become one

of

them

The Chinese subtitles' choice in relation to their translation of the metaphor of this discussion on female leadership is revealing in relation to the question of linguistic equivalence. In the English dialogue, the heroine shows her awareness that some of her fellow party members think of her becoming the party leader running for Prime Minister is like a *chambermaid* (a general) leading an army (the Conservative Party) to battle (the election campaign). Her imagery serves to underline her disbelief in the possibility of her holding such a role. However, *chambermaid* in English is quite a specific word with a specific socio-

economic context. In the modern world, it refers to a paid housemaid or menial worker in a hotel (*OED*). It is a word which relates to a low-paid job whose holder is unlikely to access the upper echelons of political power. The Chinese subtitles, however, lessen the stark contrast between *chambermaid* and leader as they choose to render *chambermaid* simply as “家庭主妇” (“housewife”). While Chinese does have a word for someone who cleans hotel rooms for guests, “清洁工” (“cleaner”), the word is gender neutral and therefore cannot make the original’s specific point in relation to female power and possibility. Therefore, while the subtitles maintain the gender discourse of the source texts, they are unable to match its specific imagery.

In summary, what the Chinese subtitles reveal in rendering metaphors of female leadership is that translation is not simply an act of faithful reproduction, but, rather, a deliberate act of selection taken the target culture’s linguistic and cultural acceptance into full consideration (Gentzler and Tymoczko, 2002: xxi). Generalisation is employed to speak for the Chinese context in that the caring imagery of housewives appeals to Chinese audiences (Chen, 2013).

5.3. *Metaphors of Terrorism and War*

As the battle against terrorism loomed large in Thatcher’s era, it is unsurprising that terrorism is a key image in her political speeches. Reference is made to metaphors of terrorism and war – closely associated with terror attacks drawn from the film *The Iron Lady*. Terrorist enemies targeted in speeches within the film include the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Argentinian forces threatening the Falklands. It is crucial to note that when talking about IRA terrorism and the Falklands war, these are not themselves metaphors but the way in which they are depicted are metaphorical. While the IRA was perhaps more conventionally categorised by some as terrorists, the application of terrorist vocabulary to the nation of Argentina serves more visibly as a politically motivated attempt to bolster support for the Falklands War.

Example 3: Conceptual Gang

(1)Description of Scene: The Falkland Islands, a British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic, have fallen. Argentina claims its marines went ashore as a spearhead this morning to capture key targets, including the capital, Port Stanley. Thatcher comments on this invasion.

(2)Line: MARGARET: *Gentlemen, the Argentinian Junta...*

which is a fascist gang...

has invaded our sovereign territory. This cannot be tolerated.

May I make plain my negotiating position?

I will not negotiate with criminals or thugs.

The Falkland Islands belong to Britain, and I want them

back.

(3)Translation: 先生们 阿根廷军阀...

就是一群法西斯暴徒...

对于我们统治区域的无耻侵犯 是绝不能姑息的

容我明确一下谈判的立场

我不会和任何暴徒及凶犯谈判

福克兰群岛隶属英国 我要求它回归英国

(4)Back Translation:

MARGARET: *Gentlemen Argentinian military clique...*

definitely is a group of Faxisi ferocious disciple...

We absolutely cannot tolerate the shameless violation of our govern

area.

Let me be clear about my position of negotiation.

I will never negotiate with any ferocious disciple and murderer.

Fukelan islands belong to Britain I demand its return to Britain

The subtitle clearly underlines the linguistic, cultural and ideological challenges for the Chinese subtitles. First of all, the subtitles foreignise the initial part of “the Argentinian Junta” by transcribing the country’s possessive noun “Argentinian” phonetically as “阿根廷”/ “A gen ting”. “Junta”, defined as “a military or political group that rules a country after taking power by force” (OED), is rendered as a Chinese cultural equivalent “军阀”/ “military clique”. However, in English *Junta*, although it is part of common usage in elevated register, it is still clearly a word of foreign origin (it originally referred to a Spanish or Portuguese council). The Chinese rendering of this word contains none of these foreign overtones which serve Thatcher’s characterisation of the enemy as alien. Fascist gang underlines an intriguing use of foreignisation and linguistic equivalence in the Chinese subtitles. Fascist has been transliterated as “法西斯”/ “Faxisi” whilst gang, defined as “a group of young people involved in petty crime or violence” (OED), is translated as “暴徒”/ “ferocious disciple” in a more savagely fierce manner. The choice of words in Chinese reveals that

the speaker strongly disagrees with the act of war in question. Another image relating to this war is the translation of the words “criminals or thugs”. While in English these mean “a person who has committed a crime” and “a violent person, especially a criminal” (*OED*) respectively, the Chinese subtitles amplify the negative connotations of these words by rendering “thug” as “凶犯”/ “murderer”. If the subtitles in this example lose the foreign attributes of the Argentinian Junta, they add to the violence of Thatcher’s criticism.

Charteris-Black’s focus on terrorism, war and battle that are metaphorically portrayed force us to consider the subtitling of Thatcher’s politics in *The Iron Lady* and Chinese politics as a subtext. Linguistic representation is achieved via the application of transliteration and ideological transfer is fulfilled by adding the more negative and strong overtones compared to the original text in the Chinese subtitling. The application of transliteration and amplification is adopted in this case to explicitly state the strong position of Chinese politics when it comes to terrorism. In other words, the Chinese translation is clearly conditioned by its political agenda and by the rules governing the political systems in which it operates (Díaz-Cintas, 2012: 282).

5.4. Metaphors Relating to Trade Unions

Charteris-Black (2005: 170) considers the place given to economic problems in relation to unemployment and inflation. Thatcher frequently conceptualised unemployment as an enemy and as a conflict in which she was at battle (Charteris-Black, 2005: 170). Thatcher’s dialogue concerning the above issues allows her to justify her attempts to restrict the power of Trade Unions.

Example 4: Trade Unions Persecute Workers

(1) *Description of the Scene: Margaret Thatcher encourages people to get back to work after the strike led by the Trade Unions.*

(2) *Line:*

MARGARET: The Trade Unions Movement was founded to protect workers.

Now it persecutes them. It stops them from working.

It is killing jobs and it is bringing this country to its knees.

I say enough.

It’s time to get up.

It’s time to go to work.

It’s time to put the Great back into Great Britain.

(3) Translation: 工会运动是为了保护工人
而现在却在行迫害之事 阻止工人去工作
这会破坏就业机会 更会让这个国家捉襟见肘
我说 是时候结束了
是时候站起来 回到工作中去
是时候 让曾经的日不落重现辉煌

(4) Back Translation:

MARGARET: Trade Unions movement was founded to protect workers
but now performing an act of persecuting
and preventing workers from working.
This can destroy working opportunity even can make this country
expose
its elbow
Let me say it is time to stop
It is time to stand up and go back to work
It is time to let the sun once never sets reappear splendidly

Interestingly, bodily images and lexicalised metaphors are key also to this example. Thatcher accuses Trade Unions of “bringing this country to its knees”. She personifies Britain as a human who is suffering. The Chinese translation maintains a bodily image in order to underline the very real impact of economic difficulties on the individual. The subtitles though do not translate the bodily image of the original. Instead, they substitute it for a *chengyu*, a set phrase “捉襟见肘” / “to expose its elbow” (to have too many difficulties to cope with) (*C-E Dictionary*). While this Chinese *chengyu* has multiple meanings, it generally indicates a person in difficulty. However, there is an argument to be made that it again weakens the impact of the source dialogue. In English, a person on their knees cannot work, walk or function. In contrast, the Chinese *chengyu*, in one of its possible meanings,³ serves as an indication that you still can work to overcome difficulty. Again, although the precise content of the English source is lost, the *chengyu* with its elevated rhetoric translates the impact of the original speech.

³ The Chinese “chengyu”, “捉襟见肘” (“to expose its elbow”) has multiple meanings: “pulling out the front piece of clothes only to expose elbows; to describe the state in raggedness; to attend to one thing and lose sight of another and to struggle to cope with too many difficulties”. The above multiple meanings are available from *Online Chengyu Dictionary* http://chengyu.teachercn.com/zhuo/cy_40102.html.

Setting out her alternative vision as opposed to that of the Trade Unions, Thatcher in the English source says, “It’s time to put the Great back into Great Britain”. While Chinese has different words to describe Thatcher’s country, (“英国”/ “United Kingdom”; “大不列颠帝国”/ “Great Britain” and “英格兰”/ “England”), the subtitles do not name Great Britain in the closing line of the example. Instead, they make a cultural reference to the phrase “the Empire on which the sun will never set”, a phrase which in the Chinese context metaphorically represents Great Britain. This phrase is extensively used for the British Empire to imply that at least one part of this territory is exposed in daylight, mainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. British Empire enjoys a During this period, the British Empire reached a territorial size larger than any other empire in the globe (Fordyce, 1931: 152). The subtitles, thus, draw on the cultural knowledge of the Chinese audience as well as the imperial history of Britain and China. Furthermore, the Chinese subtitle, “日不落” / “the sun once never sets” denotes “greatness” in the same way as the original line of the source film. Therefore, Thatcher’s rhetorical use of “great” in her line can be replicated in the subtitle.

In summary, the Chinese subtitles in relation to the Trade Unions adopt different strategies when translating economic conflicts. Interestingly, bodily language features, echoing Thatcher’s attempt to underline the physical impact of the economy and the trade Unions on British citizens and their bodies. The lexicalised metaphor of bringing this country to its knees is translated as a Chinese four-character idiom “捉襟见肘” / “to expose its elbow” (to have too many difficulties to cope with) (*C-E Dictionary*). Physical impact and human bodies transcend cultural and linguistic divides. They are, therefore, perhaps most readily translatable in the subtitling process. Therefore, the original meaning is replicated though replacing a domesticating imagery. The Chinese subtitles migrate from a passive mere linguistic transfer to a more active and creative agent taking part in the shaping of ideological discourse (Díaz-Cintas, 2012: 283) to translate metaphors relating to Trade Unions.

5.5. Metaphors Relating to Political Opponents

Margaret Thatcher is known for her stinging attacks on the labour party. According to Charteris-Black (2005: 174), socialism, for the Conservative Party, is represented as an enemy state that has undertaken an invasion and occupation. Therefore, any measures to oppose socialism are conceived of as

heroic efforts to resist an alien ideology. In this section, selected example containing lexicalised metaphors associated with political opponents implicitly and/or explicitly will be discussed and analysed. The Chinese subtitles may domesticate the imagery of the original but, in their word choice, they offer a different moral reading of Thatcher's Conservatism, which is diametrically opposed to Chinese Communism.

Example 5: The Shackles of Socialism

(1) *Description of Scene: Margaret Thatcher is asking for votes to support her political campaign.*

(2) *Line: MARGARET: Now, as the test draws near, I ask your help.*

*That together we can shake off the shackles of socialism
and restore to greatness this country that we love.*

And the only way is for the Conservatives to win!

(3) *Translation: 现今 大选临近 我需要你们的支持*

让我们一起砸碎社会主义的镣铐

让辉煌重回这个你我深爱的国家

保守党获胜是实现这一目的的唯一途径

(4) *Back Translation:*

MARGARET: Now general election is approaching I need your support

Let us smash socialism's shackle.

Let glory return to this country with which you and I are both in

love.

The only way to achieve this goal is to let the Conservative party

win.

This example essentially construes Margaret Thatcher's political position and her reliance on a discourse of conflict that is reliant on antithetical metaphors. Thatcher's political opponents, the left wing, are depicted as imprisoning the United Kingdom. *Shackles* in English are a pair of fetters connected together by a chain used to fasten a prisoner's wrist or ankles together (OED). The archaism of the word in English underlines Thatcher's vision of socialism as constraining, out of touch nature of socialism. Her imagery underlines the strength of the Conservative Party as she implies that the nation collectively is strong enough to throw off and break the metal of its chains. The Chinese subtitles maintain this image of potency, arguably even increasing it by replacing *shake off* with “砸碎” / “smash”. Rather than using a modern option “手铐”/ “handcuffs”, the Chinese subtitles render it as “镣铐”, an archaic

word which means “manacles, leg-irons, fetters and handcuffs” (*C-E Dictionary*). However, in this context, this term is used metaphorically to refer to the political opponent of Conservatism. Interestingly, the vocabulary of crime, punishment and restraints proves to be largely equivalent. In contrast, China’s experience of general elections does not map onto the political structure in Britain. Thus, while the subtitles can translate the words “general election” as “大选” / “big election”, the entity in question is not at all the same in political terms. In Thatcher’s Britain, political parties of very different political beliefs fight for supremacy. In China, while people vote at a regional level, they vote to select individuals from one single party. There is thus, as Schleiermacher points out, a cultural gap between source text and target text, a gap which the subtitler can bridge in linguistic terms but not cultural terms (Krasemann, 2005: 181-187).

To conclude, relating to political opponents, there is clearly a large cultural gap when moving between the Chinese and UK political contexts. The subtitles adopt different ways of rendering the original and bridging this gap, often using set Chinese idioms to domesticate and generalise in part a political context which is necessarily alien. Seen from this perspective, the Chinese translation not only adheres to the original political text, but also strengthens the constraints of the political opponents of the source text as opposed to that of herself. That is to say, the translation flow becomes a one way traffic in this case solely delivering what has been truly discussed in the original dialogue, without mediating the target politics. Following this line of thought, it can be claimed that translation practice can develop different types of political agenda (Díaz-Cintas, 2012: 282) though it contradicts the political encounter for the receiving culture.

6. Conclusion

Using Charteris-Black’s classifications of conflict metaphors in Margaret Thatcher’s speeches during her premiership, as well as adding Meifang Zhang’s categories of correlational metaphor, this paper has sought to analyse the specificities of subtitling Thatcher’s politics in *The Iron Lady* (2011) for Chinese audiences. What it has revealed is that while different rhetorical strategies in political discourse between the UK and China have been identified, the subtitles to *The Iron Lady* adopt a more dynamic approach to the subtitling process. In places the subtitles domesticate heavily by using Chinese four-

character idioms which clearly anchor the viewer in a Chinese linguistic context even while they watch a film with a clearly foreign origin and values. At times, the Chinese subtitles adhere to the source imagery ignoring the Chinese politics as a sub-context as in the example of *to shack off the shackles of socialism* has illustrated. There are key moments of cultural equivalence and interestingly, they relate to bodily functions, *bringing this country to its knees*. The subtitles convey a Conservative ideology in a context entirely opposed to that ideology. They translate thus both the foreign language and the foreign political culture. The subtitles do not follow one static approach or one set translation theory. Rather, they adopt approaches (domestication, transliteration, amplification, etc.) from across the spectrum of translation theory to create subtitles which are driven by very different imperatives: the need of the audience, the requirement to convey the source text and culture as well as the need to obey the cultural conventions of source and the receiving culture. Although the different political systems in the UK and China draw on the same set of political rhetoric and use multiple translation strategies, they portray key political figures and political events in contrasting and often incompatible ways. It is essential to investigate the subtitling process and the transferal of linguistic and political values. Such intricate processes reveal the ways in which the Chinese authorities interpret the foreign languages and politics of the target culture and thus can influence the understanding of the foreign languages and culture amongst their target audiences.

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