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**Exploring the Intersection of Translation and Music:  
An Analysis of How Foreign Songs Reach Chinese  
Audiences**

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**Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures**

**The University of Edinburgh**

**2016**

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has been entirely composed by me and that the work herein is mine. Ideas and passages reproduced from other sources have been duly acknowledged. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Lingli Xie

31 May 2016

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Şebnem Susam-Saraeva, whose insightful comments and boundless patience have been an invaluable support throughout my entire PhD study. Whenever I was struck with a particular issue and could not get my thoughts straight, I could rely on her opinion to put myself in the right direction. Sincere thanks also to Dr. Charlotte Bosseaux, Dr Nikki Moran, Dr Julian Ward and Dr. Sharon Deane-Cox, whose guidance and critical insights were particularly helpful in the beginning phase of this research.

My unreserved appreciation goes to all the teaching staff in the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh for their help at different times and in different ways over the years of my PhD study. I also wish to thank all of my friends in Edinburgh and beyond, who have lovingly accompanied me through the PhD isolation of this long journey, such as Hsiao Hsini, Chen Nianhan and Du Jiayi. Special mention also belongs to Rebekah Thompson for her time and efforts to read parts of my early drafts, as well as the subtitling team for sharing valuable information with me. I am equally indebted to the China Scholarships Council and the University of Edinburgh for funding my PhD study, allowing me to embark on such a fulfilling journey of learning.

Last but not least, my family has always been my strongest support. I am deeply grateful to my parents, Xie Xiri and Huang Zhenyan for their constant encouragement and unlimited love. They have patiently endured long days and sometimes loneliness when I, their only daughter, have been away from China and cannot attend family reunions as before. This thesis is for them.

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## Abstract

The thesis looks into the practice of song translation, which occupies a peripheral position in translation studies (TS) despite its commonplace occurrence and significant impact on the global spread of songs. Foreign songs enjoy enormous appeal in China, where different methods have been adopted to translate them with the aim of enhancing listeners' full reception. In particular, the practice of writing Chinese lyrics anew and setting them to the foreign tunes regardless of the semantic relationship between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) has proliferated over the past decades. Some translated songs capture the gist of the original lyrics omitting minor details whereas some sever their relations with the original. This blurs the boundaries between translation, adaptation and rewriting lyrics. Another noticeable phenomenon is the emergence of self-organising communities, whose involvement in translating song lyrics and circulating subtitled music videos (MVs) cannot be overlooked in today's digital landscape.

Song translation can be understood as a field with its own "rules of the game" and exchange of different forms of capital following a Bourdieusian perspective. Adopting a case study methodology, the thesis investigates the particular field of song translation with special reference to the translation practices of a veteran song translator named Xue Fan 薛范, online amateur translators, and a professional lyricist from Hong Kong called Albert Leung 林夕. These case studies have been conducted for providing an in-depth analysis of China's song translation activities through time and the dynamics of the power relations in the field.

To translate a song from one language and culture into another invariably involves the losses and gains of certain elements, given the song's semiotic richness. Against this backdrop, the thesis attempts to examine how the interplay of different meaning-making modes in a song has been dealt with by different agents under various circumstances through close examination of the relationship between STs and



TTs. This will allow a better understanding of the production, circulation and reception of song translations in respective historical, ideological and social contexts. It is hoped that the thesis can provide new insights into our understanding of ‘translation’ in relation to music, and further shed light on how translation evolves at the convergence of music and technology in the globalisation era.

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## List of Abbreviations

AMV	American Music Awards
CMA	Chinese Musicians' Association
CCTV	Central Television Channel
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Centre
EEG	Emperor Entertainment Group
EP	Extended Play
MOC	Ministry of Culture
MV	Music Video
SAPPRFT	China's State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television
SRFA	Sino-Russian Friendship Association
ST	Source Text
RTHK	Radio Television Hong Kong
TAC	The Translators Association of China
TL	Target Language
TS	Translation Studies
TT	Target Text
UGC	User-generated Content
UGT	User-generated Translation
VMA	Video Music Awards

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Every year without fail, Edinburgh draws thousands of visitors to its traditional Hogmanay celebrations to welcome the New Year. Watching the spectacular fireworks lighting up the Edinburgh skyline on the last day of 2014 brought back memories of the Hogmanay party I joined two years ago on Princes Street. When the bells struck midnight, tens of thousands of us sang *Auld Lang Syne* (1907) by Frank Stanley together, regardless of whether we knew each other or not. To my surprise, after finishing the first line “should auld acquaintance be forgot, and never brought to mind”, I could not remember the remaining words but continued humming along in Chinese.<sup>1</sup> The translated Chinese version is titled *Youyi dijiu tianchang* 友谊地久天长 [Friendship Lasts Forever] (2005),<sup>2</sup> which recalls happy days gone by, separation and reunion. The song has been so well-received among Chinese people that it is frequently sung and heard in graduation ceremonies, large soirées and concerts.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this explains why I could not help joining the chorus in my own language. Admittedly, my familiarity with the tune and Chinese words helped me to better understand the themes of friendship and reunion that underlie the Scottish folk song.

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<sup>1</sup> Here, ‘Chinese’ refers to the language used by Chinese people, which, as a single language, consists of different regional dialects, such as Mandarin, Shanghaiese, Cantonese and Hokkien-Taiwanese. However, in the current thesis, ‘Chinese-language songs’ are generally used to refer to Mandarin songs. It has to be clarified that one case study (see more in Chapter 6) is focused on a lyricist from Hong Kong, who has written pairs of Cantonese and Mandarin songs to similar melodies targeting different markets. In order to offer a more nuanced differentiation between two versions of a song, I will specify the song by Cantonese or Mandarin, not by saying “Chinese”. Otherwise, ‘Chinese’ is adopted to broadly refer to the language into which any song is rendered from a foreign song for the people in China.

<sup>2</sup> Different Chinese singers have performed this song and here I choose the recording by one famous female vocal group in the country *Heiyazi* 黑鸭子 [Black Duck] released in 2005. One can hear their performance at <http://www.kuwo.cn/yinyue/101363/> (last accessed 19 January 2016).

<sup>3</sup> One fine example is the prominent cross-cultural collaboration of the song by Chinese soprano Song Zuying 宋祖英, Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo, Taiwanese singer-songwriter Jay Chou 周杰伦 and Chinese pianist Lang Lang 朗朗 in Song’s “Glamour of 2009 Summer Concert at Bird’s Nest”. The performance can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89LBOXeGZ3Y> (last accessed 19 July 2015).

I doubt whether everyone at the New Year's Party truly understood its meaning, although it has been translated into different languages and widely sung all around the world.

Let us take a look at another example, *Gangnam Style* (2012). Sung by PSY, a pop artist from South Korea, the song went viral overnight and spawned countless parodies on the Internet. It has to be pointed out that the dance moves in its MV<sup>4</sup> might have contributed to the popularity of the song. That said, unlike *Auld Lang Syne*, people rarely sing it in their native tongue or simply manage to sing out the Korean phrase 'Oppa Gangnam Style'. Most people with no knowledge of Korean language do not know or fully understand the lyrics. This left me wondering how this song took over the world. Are songs really able to make people from different cultures feel the same way? Why do some songs get translated into different languages whilst others are always performed in the original language? Is it the case that people tend to ignore some songs' lyrics and focus on other audio-visual aspects instead? All these questions seem to coincide with what initially motivated me to start this study, i.e. is music<sup>5</sup> truly a universal language? If this is the case, why are foreign songs translated into Chinese in different ways?

## 1.1 Research Background

As a primary source of leisure and entertainment, music is omnipresent in our daily lives. We have a wide variety of encounters with it, from turning on our iPods

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<sup>4</sup> One relevant report about the popularity of the MV for the song can be read at <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/most-viewed-youtube-videos-from-gangnam-style-to-wrecking-ball-9607483.html> (last accessed 19 July 2015).

<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning that music, when combined with words, does function like a language in some ways but sometimes, because of the components such as pitch, rhythm, and tempo, music can communicate in powerful ways that language just can't. For example, as a study suggests, music can have a similar effect on listeners from different cultures. More information about the study is available at <http://themindunleashed.org/2015/02/music-indeed-universal-language-study-concludes.html> (last accessed 17 January 2016). Here, I would like to see how the sense of both the text and music of a song is transferred in the translation process.

during our workouts to having background music played in TV programmes or grocery stores. The role of music in everyday life and social development can never be downplayed (Frith 2003; Kaindl 2005; Lull 1987). Driven by the development of communication technologies and mass media, particularly the advent of the Internet, music has been increasingly distributed far beyond its place of origin in the age of globalisation (Connell & Gibson 2003; Wall 2003). This, against the backdrop of China's practice of reform and opening up to the outside world, has greatly enhanced the influx of global popular cultural products into mainland China since the 1980s. Subsequently, the Chinese people have more opportunities to hear foreign songs than ever before.<sup>6</sup>

As observed by some scholars (Davies & Bentahila 2008; Desblache 2007; Lury 2002), it is commonly assumed that music can break down national barriers and that the incomprehensibility of lyrics in an unfamiliar language does not necessarily conflict with the listener's enjoyment of the song. However, for Newmark (2006), the intelligibility of the words in a song cannot be overlooked for the sake of full appreciation. The relationship between words and music in the conveyance of a song's meaning is a complex issue, but the fact that many songs have been translated into different languages throughout the world does raise a pertinent question: how important is it to translate songs and how translatable are songs across cultures?

It has to be noted that song translation is not a new phenomenon in China. According to Qian Renkang 钱仁康 (1999), song translation activities in China can be traced back to the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), when the American song *Marching Through Georgia* (1904) and the French song *La Marseillaise* (1792) were

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<sup>6</sup> During the same period, an increasing number of mass cultural products were gradually imported into mainland China from Hong Kong and Taiwan (Hong 1996; Postiglione & Tang 1997). In this light, this study is not confined to Chinese songs produced geographically within mainland China but songs sung in the Chinese language and distributed throughout the Greater China Region and other diasporic Chinese communities such as Singapore and Malaysia. Referring to the area of mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, this geographical term (the Greater China Region) is more commonly used in business, commerce and culture. It shall be pointed out that my adoption of this term here has no political connotation.

among the first to be rendered into Chinese.<sup>7</sup> Over the twentieth century, Japanese school songs, revolutionary and folk songs from the former Soviet Union, and foreign film songs have been selected for translation in the country (Xue 2002: 193-218), and some of them are still being sung today. With the increasing availability of foreign songs, new working practices have emerged, such as music companies releasing songs (mostly in the form of CDs and cassette tapes) with Chinese translations of the lyrics in album inserts, Internet-based fan communities offering and circulating translations and subtitled MVs among themselves, and TV stations providing screen translation of live performances. Several national magazines, which serve to promote English language learning, such as *Fengkuang yingyu* 疯狂英语 [Crazy English] and *Yinyue tiantang* 音乐天堂 [Music Heaven], now introduce English songs to readers through each issue. As such, the Chinese translations of the lyrics, together with the background information of the song, are provided.

Another noticeable trend is the proliferation of Chinese songs with lyrics written completely anew and set to foreign tunes (Chao 2010; Lei 2007). Some songs created in this way reasonably omit minor details and still capture the gist of the original, whereas others take too many liberties resulting in lyrics that have no semantic relation with the original. These are “replacement texts” in Low’s (2013) words,<sup>8</sup> who argues that they shall not be deemed as translations. Nevertheless, the sameness or similarity of the music helps to create a false impression on the listeners that the two songs are closely related to each other.

The resulting blurred borderline between translation and rewriting, together

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the thesis, as for information in a language other than English, all translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>8</sup> I would call them ‘cover songs’ in my thesis. Here it needs to be clarified that the definition of ‘cover songs’ varies, which, for example, can mean “a new performance or recording of a previously recorded, commercially released song by someone other than the original artist or composer”, as seen on [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cover\\_version](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cover_version) (last accessed 29 December 2014). In my present study, the term primarily refers to a song with lyrics written anew to fit the melody of an already existing song. The lyrics can sometimes completely alter the meaning of the original.



with the proliferation of cover songs, challenges our conventional understanding of translation. This is because the meaning of the ST generally functions as a yardstick to evaluate that of the TT in TS. It is obvious that to continue with examining whether the target lyrics are ‘faithful’ to the original cannot suffice to explain the aforementioned diverse phenomena. Moreover, as Kaindl (2005) suggests, songs are plurisemiotic artefacts, in which music, words and performance all collaborate in the creation of meaning. Kaindl’s message resonates with the notion of multimodality defined by Kress and Leeuwen as “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined” (2001: 20). They further suggest that modes are “semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realization of discourses and types of (inter)action” (ibid.: 21). Hence, songs, a kind of audiovisual products, are multimodal as different semantic signs (melody, pitch and rhythm in music, verbal text, image, etc.) coexist and make up the meaning.

In dealing with the transfer of audiovisual products into another language, the three most common translation modes are “dubbing, subtitling and voiceover” (Dáz Cintas 2009: 4). Dubbing involves the use of the acoustic channel and synchronised lip movements to reproduce the the original soundtrack while subtitling refers to the visual superimposition of the original written text and other linguistic elements. Voiceover retains the original soundtrack but to a minimal auditory level so as to allow the target audience to hear the translation “orally overlapped to the original” (ibid.: 5). These different translational approaches may be employed to deal with different genres or for different audiences. In a similar vein, various modes of song translation have been observed in common practice: a written text (literal translation of lyrics presented on their own such as on CD inserts), subtitling (lyrics accompanied by visuals and therefore under spatial and temporal constraints), and a singable target version, as we have seen in preceding discussion.

Hence, with the current thesis, rather than adhering to the source-bound theories

of equivalence, I intend to investigate the various modes that this particular genre of translation can be (and under what circumstances) and how specific socio-cultural contexts influence song translation. Overall, I hope to fulfil the following research aims and objectives.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Research**

Despite the fact that the number of popular songs<sup>9</sup> being translated in their global distribution seems to be on the rise, song translation has thus far received scant attention amongst translation scholars (Low 2013; Susam-Sarajeva 2008). Hence, the primary objective of the thesis is to supplement the current body of literature by teasing out the specificities of song translation and shedding light on “why and how does who communicate what to whom and with what effect” (Tagg 1982: 39) when songs travel across linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. This can be done in two main ways:

Firstly, as we will see in the literature review, much of relevant research has been examined from a Western perspective, resulting in a lack of studies which systematically explore the song translation phenomena outside Europe and America.

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, it is hard to pin down exactly what popular music is, as certain types of music may be popular than other types. Alternatively, one type of music might be popular during a certain period of time but its popularity can be on the wane as time goes on. It is therefore not surprising that there is no widely accepted definition of popular music. but I would like to agree with the point made by Parker that “for popular culture the authority is the market itself...the song’s popularity in all senses comes from word of mouth, sharing, airplay” (2011: 166). To some extent, this signifies that the more people experience the song, the more popular the song. In their tentative efforts to establish an economic and transmission model for defining folk, art and pop music, Booth and Kuhn note that “indirect patronage by a mass audience” constitutes “the basis of pop music economics”, which is “dependent on some technological means of either physically collecting an audience in a single space or of disseminating the music performance (either through broadcast media or recorded media)”(1990: 419). ‘Indirect patronage’ is further referred to as the third entity needed to “connect the musician and the mass audience” (1990: 425). Hence, a workable definition of popular songs in my study refers broadly to songs which are mass-produced or mass-consumed in different ways so as to allow for a wide range of songs to be analysed.

As Tymoczko (2006: 13) suggests, the thinking of non-Western peoples helps to achieve more flexible and broader theories about translation. Taking a close look at the practices of song translation in the context of China and exploring relevant implications thus acts in response to the call for incorporating non-Western materials into the discipline of TS. To some extent, it also attempts to challenge the domination of Anglo-American music in both fields of translation and music studies. Given China's rapid economic growth during recent years, it is difficult to avoid looking at China if we bear in mind what impact translation can have on the music industry at large. As the most populous country in the world, China means a potentially massive market for international music labels. Thus, the present thesis hopes to address the imbalance of current research on translation and music by endeavouring to draw a comprehensive picture of the song translation scene in China. Through examining various practices of introducing foreign songs to Chinese people over time, we can check whether China shows a similar pattern occurring in other places around the world or the practice of translating songs in China differs from that in other countries.

Furthermore, the diversity of song translation practices calls into question related research prescribing how one should translate a song. As implied earlier, it is debatable whether setting lyrics in the target language (TL) without attaching due importance to their semantic relationship with the original words can be considered translation. Only by seeing such a practice as a type of song translation rather than an exception, can we respect the heterogeneity of processing foreign songs and the creativity of those involved in the interlingual textual transfer. Therefore, another key aim is to go beyond the linguistic equivalence paradigm and widen the focus of studies on song translation. With TS taking the 'cultural turn' (Bassnett & Lefevere 1990) from the traditional linguistic perspective since the 1980s, the scope of TS is no longer confined to the text itself. Instead, more emphasis has been given to the broader historical and cultural milieu where translation is taking place. Discussions

have increasingly focused on how translations are influenced by cultural and ideological factors. The emergence of the ‘cultural turn’ has also inspired more new perspectives on translation, among which, sociology has been recently applied to TS, leading to a ‘sociological turn’ (Wolf 2007). In particular, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production is widely referenced (Inghilleri 2005; Sheffy 1997; Simeoni 1995, 1998).

With a dual focus on agency and structure, Bourdieu’s sociology not only draws attention to the subjectivity of translators in the translation process, but also highlights the fact that translators are agents embedded in relations of power and competition, restricting their freedom in making choices. Meanwhile, the relationships between translators and other different agents involved in the production and dissemination of music are taken into consideration, thereby further widening the focus of analysis beyond the translated songs. This implies that a Bourdieusian perspective can situate the translation in question in its proper social context and offer us more analytical rigour in explaining how translators both take part in and transform “the forms of practice in which they engage” (Inghilleri 2005: 143). Following Bourdieu’s sociological concepts and focusing on a less-studied area, it is hoped that this thesis can offer a glimpse into the intricate interplay between music and translation and the specific role of translation and translation-related activities in the worldwide spread of songs. In line with the research objectives, the research questions will be listed in the following section.

### **1.3 Research Questions, Scope and Structure of the Thesis**

#### **1.3.1 Research Questions**

The overarching question underpinning this thesis is whether and how historical, social, ideological and economic factors have shaped song translation activities in the Greater China Region. This can be further divided into the following specific

research questions.

- (1) Considering the diverse song translational phenomena in China,<sup>10</sup> could Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production provide us with analytical tools for studying and understanding song translation as a socially situated activity or *field*?
- (2) Are songs being translated for comprehension or for performance, and why? What kinds of translation strategies are observed in respective cases?
- (3) What kinds of socio-cultural determinants condition the agents' textual behaviours? What kinds of capital do different agents bring to the field and how does this capital allow them to operate in the field?
- (4) Has the practice of translating songs changed over time and, if so, how has it changed? How can we account for this disparity of translation practice, or in Bourdieu's sense, how is the configuration of the field of song translation influenced by agents' struggles over specific forms of capital?

### 1.3.2 Structure of the Thesis

In line with the above research questions and following Bourdieu's line of thought, I seek to undertake a descriptive analysis of China's song translation activities on both the micro and macro levels. The rest of this thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter 2 reviews the extant research on music and translation. Issues such as different viewpoints on relevant practice, challenges encountered in translating songs, and existing forms of song translation have been critically analysed. Based on Hermans' notion of 'equivalence' (2007) and discussions of adaptation ( Bastin 1998 & 2009; Sanders 2006), this chapter further examines the overlaps and differences of the terms, i.e. 'lyrics translation', 'adaptation' and 'rewriting' within the context of

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<sup>10</sup> Throughout history, there have been different modes of song translation in China. However, as to be detailed in the Chapter of Methodology, I will focus on the translation activities in the country within a more recent period (post-1980s until now).

music. The clarification of these concepts sets the backdrop for discussing how different dimensions of songs are dealt with and incorporating the different transformations that foreign songs can undergo. This also offers a chance to move away from traditional notions of translation that stress equivalence of meaning, therefore expanding the research on song translation. In the last section, I examine how Bourdieu's sociology has been applied to the discipline of TS with an in-depth discussion of his key concepts, namely, *field*, *habitus*, *capital* and *illusio*. Their implications for the song translation activities in China under different contexts of production, circulation and consumption are briefly discussed as well.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the methodological framework, criteria of data selection and selected data in accordance with the research questions. This thesis is primarily concerned with understanding how song translation activities in China have developed over time and what contextual factors might have contributed to the differences in ways of dealing with foreign songs. Accordingly, the case study approach (Susam-Sarajeva 2009) is adopted for an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon. In response to the rationale for using Bourdieu's conceptual framework, the thesis chooses to focus on people and networks as cases. Based upon previous classification of lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting, analytic focus is placed in particular on explaining the translation behaviours of the three previously mentioned cases. It is worth noting that the selection of the three as cases takes into consideration the need for narrowing the scope of the thesis. As concluded by Xue (2002: 193-218), China's song translation activities have gone through four stages in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Pioneering Period (1920-1940s), the Flourishing Period (1950s), the Stagnation Period (1960-1970s) and the Challenging Period (1980s until mid-1990s). An in-depth analysis of the historical development of song translation in the country over such a broad timespan would not be manageable within the word and time limits of a PhD thesis. Alternatively, concentrating on Xue, one of the most important song translators in the country with sixty years of experience, can provide

relevant contextual information for a subsequent analysis focused on China's contemporary song translation activities since the late 1980s.

The methodology chapter also explores the use of netnography (Kozinets 2010) for identifying and collecting relevant online data. It is worth mentioning that the 'Translating Music Project' (<http://www.translatingmusic.com/>), an international network project initiated in 2013 with the support of the Arts & Humanities Research Council, currently serves as an important platform for people to study how words linked to music are translated and further share ideas. The website can offer me a broad range of data on music-related translation and videos of lively workshop discussions. In addition, blogs, forums, video-sharing websites and other social networking services can be a rich source of information about contemporary amateur translators. Furthermore, given the difficulty of approaching Xue Fan and Albert Leung<sup>11</sup> personally, the media coverage and blog accounts of the two, as well as published statements and reviews of music recordings have been analysed. These paratextual materials serve to contextualise the translated texts, thereby helping to uncover how the agents in the field make the decision whether to translate a song or not, and why they deal with song texts in a particular way.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 undertake the sociological investigation into the individual case studies, what happens to the songs in the process of what I call translation. This entails a detailed comparative textual analysis as to find what is omitted or changed

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<sup>11</sup> His Chinese name is Leung Wai Man 梁伟文, better known by his pen name Lin Xi 林夕 to Mandopop music lovers. It is said that the reason for choosing such a pen name lies in his admiration for the late Hong Kong lyricist Richard Lam 林振强 and that the two Chinese characters Lin 林 and Xi 夕 of his pen name happen to form another poetic Chinese character meng 梦 [dream], which he found beautiful when reading the novel *A Dream of Red Mansions*. This information is given in the beginning of Episode 7 of a 10-episode documentary titled *Sishi guren lai* 似是故人来 [Like an Old Friend's Visit] unraveling Leung's lyric-writing career broadcast by the Programme *Yinyue chuanqi* 音乐传奇 [Music Legends] of China's state-run Central Television Channel (CCTV) Music Channel (Channel 15) between 20 February and 06 March of 2012. The official website of the programme is <http://tv.cntv.cn/video/1-23126> (last accessed 20 January 2015). This episode is available at <http://xiyou.cntv.cn/p-15978-46ab0d64-ff7e-11e0-b091-a4badb4696b6.html> (last accessed 23 January 2016).

in the Chinese song as compared to the original vocal text. Moreover, the participants involved and the context in which the translation takes place will be examined so as to illuminate how song translation in its different forms has been practised at specific times in the country. To specify, the first case takes a close look at Xue's translation practice and translated works as well as other extratextual factors that impinge on his way of translating songs. In the second case, three different forms of amateur song translation have been examined before the focus is laid on a particular team subtitling MVs. The motivations behind amateur song translators, their actual translational behaviour and products are comprehensively discussed. Chapter 5 presents in detail the personal and professional trajectories of the successful lyricist Albert Leung, who occasionally writes lyrics to be set to tunes of pre-existing songs so as to help with the production of cover versions. For all the three cases, aside from conducting comparative analyses of selected song examples, the analytic focus is to map them onto the contours of Bourdieu's sociological theory. In so doing, the thesis aims to figure out the habitus of different agents involved in the field of song translation, their hierarchical positions conditioned by their economic, symbolic and cultural capital, as well as what other fields can exert an influence on the field of song translation.

In terms of presenting inter-case comparisons, Chapter 7 seeks to identify the links and contrasts amongst the three cases in terms of patterns of text production and reception, and ultimately to outline a synthesis of the implications of each case. In other words, by exploring whether there are any parallels or differences amongst the practices of professional song translators, amateur translators and professional lyricists, this chapter aims to offer a panoramic view of the dynamics within the field of song translation and across interlocking fields such as politics and the music industry.

The Conclusion summarises the findings in relation to the aims and research questions of the thesis and identifies some shortcomings of the study. In sum, the



findings add to existing work on song translation by incorporating the previously less-explored translational phenomenon of songs in China and enlarging the scope to include amateur translations as well as cover songs. This yields new insights into our understanding of the role and form of translation in the cross-cultural spread of songs. Furthermore, drawing pertinent concepts from Bourdieu, the current thesis is one of the first attempts to see whether it is possible to apply Bourdieu's sociological model to song translation. Given the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of song translation as a research topic, this chapter also proposes some areas for future research.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review: A Conceptual and Theoretical Framework for Song Translation**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out to review literature pertaining to song translation, together with Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production which has been chosen as the theoretical model. It starts with an analytic overview of existing studies on music and translation, highlighting some major issues from the perspective of practitioners and researchers. The issues discussed include the necessity to translate songs and characteristics of song translation compared with general translation, as well as an overview of different types of song translation. It then moves on to discuss the term 'lyrics translation', and how it differs from 'adaptation' and 'rewriting' in my study. Clarifying these three different but closely related terms allows me to develop a more comprehensive analytical framework for the discussion of song materials in subsequent chapters. This is followed by an overview of how Bourdieu's sociology has been applied to TS from varying perspectives. Special emphasis is placed on Bourdieu's key concepts in relation to the study of translation in general and song translation activities in China in particular. The primary aim of this chapter is to lay the conceptual and theoretical framework for the analysis in the following chapters.

### **2.2 Previous Research on Song Translation**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, song translation has been under-explored within TS, despite it being a common occurrence. Hu (2007) claims that fewer than 30 journal articles have talked about song translation in China, showing that the subject currently under study occupies a similarly peripheral position in China's discipline of TS. It is nevertheless encouraging to see that the issue is taken seriously by at least some scholars and music practitioners. *Song and*

*Significance: Virtues and Vices of Vocal Translation* (2005) edited by Dinda L Gorlée, deemed as a valuable first contribution to the field, is a collection that grew from a seminar in Finland in 2003. The collection explores the relationship between music and text through analysing various musical genres including opera, folksong, hymn and art songs and popular songs. *Translation and Music*, a special issue of the journal *The Translator* in 2008 edited by Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva, adds on to Gorlée's collection with more descriptive studies on wider corpora such as North African rap and rai, rock'n roll in Russian and the appropriation of Kurdish folk songs in Turkish. According to the comprehensive bibliographies edited by Matamala and Orero (2008) and Susam-Sarajeva (2008), there have been around 200 papers on the translation of music-related texts in different European languages. Another key publication in the field is *Music, Text and Translation* edited by Helen Julia Minors in 2013, which offers insights into the multitude of issues involved in the interdisciplinary study of music and translation. All the collected contributions are undoubtedly great complements to the previous research covering a wide array of settings where music and translation intersect, as the first part of the book examines in a more nuanced manner how text is translated to music in opera and songs. Furthermore, the book significantly widens the perspectives of the study by bringing in the visual arts (painting, drawing and architecture, etc). A more recent monograph is Şebnem Susam-Saraeva's *Translation and Popular Music: Transcultural Intimacy in Turkish-Greek Relations* (2015). The book examines the relationship between translation and popular music incorporating the rapprochement element characterising the Greek and Turkish populations. It comprehensively covers various forms of song translation including non-translation, translation on printed material, cover versions and translations of lyrics on the Internet.

It is promising as there has been a growing concern over the interdependency of music and translation in recent years. Several conferences focusing on the relationship between music and translation has been organised such as the 10<sup>th</sup>

annual Portsmouth Translation Conference entitled ‘Theme: Image, Music, Text . . .? Translating Multimodalities’ at the University of Portsmouth in 2010, and the ‘International Interdisciplinary Symposium: Translation in Music’ held by Cardiff University in 2014. The Translating Music Project equally successfully organised the conference “How is Music Translated Today? Intersemiotic, Interlingual, Intralingual and Intersensorial Transfers across Musical Genres” in London in 2015. Scholars interested in vocal translation are hence brought together to exchange ideas.

It is fair to say that many scholars and practitioners have provided practical advice on translating different song genres and problematised the complex relationship between music and language from various theoretical perspectives such as socio-semiotics (Kaindl 2005 & 2012), the functionalist approach (Chen & He 2009; Franzon 2005 & 2008; Low 2005 & 2006), Venuti’s idea of ‘foreignization’ and ‘domestication’ (Fang 2014; McGoldrick 2010), and multimodality (Bosseaux 2008 & 2012). In his book *Gequ fanyi tansuo yu shijian* 歌曲翻译探索与实践 [Exploration and Practice of Song Translation] published in 2002, China’s first and as yet only book of its kind, Xue shares with the readers his fifty-year experience of translating songs. This pioneering book has filled a gap in the country’s song translation research, as it offers both a comprehensive record of the historical development and useful guiding principles on how to translate a song for novices.

The first-hand experience and theoretical enlightenment of these scholars have provided us with valuable insights to the field. It should be noted, however, subsequent findings of research into songs in European languages do not equally apply in the Chinese context. This is not just because different countries have different social settings, but also because German, French and English all belong to the Indo-European family, unlike Chinese which is classified under the branch of Sino-Tibetan. As has been explored, interfamily translation is more complicated than intrafamily translation (Wong 2006).

Furthermore, many of the discussions in the Chinese papers repetitively

examine the same song examples and briefly sum up the translation strategies or comment on the merits and shortcomings of the translations (Li 2002; Zhang 1997). To some extent, they lack analytic vigour, which motivates the current study to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the song translation phenomenon in China. This can be achieved by having a new theoretical framework and more varied translated song examples. In particular, Mateo (2008) examines how the importation of Anglo-American musicals via translation into Spain has been influenced by extra-textual factors, such as distributors' financial considerations, audience needs and reception of translated works. Her analysis of the context of production and reception inevitably involves social and cultural factors. In a similar vein, this thesis intends to contextualise the song translation process and examine whether institutional patronage, market factors, and shifts in taste have influenced the shaping of song translation in China.

As implied in the beginning of the thesis, not all songs are being translated and a translator can deploy diverse translation strategies when translating a song. This leads to two questions, why certain songs are translated and why a song is translated in a particular way instead of another. Starting with these two issues, I will explore why the co-existence of non-translation and translation has occurred, as well as unpicking the different ways of translating songs, based on a more detailed review of existing research findings.

### 2.2.1 To Translate or Not to Translate

As mentioned before, opinions are divided on the issue of whether songs need to be translated. To specify, specialists in German Romantic Lieder oppose song translation as it is thought to reduce the exotic feeling and original flavour (as cited in Low 2003: 88). Likewise, Desblache (2007: 156) implies that the exotic or arcane qualities of the lyrics partially contribute to the appeal of foreign pop music in some cases. John Blacking's following discussion attests to the complexity in exploring the

experience of musical meaning:

In music, satisfaction may be derived without absolute agreement about the meaning of the code; that is, the creator's intention to mean can be offset by a performer's or listener's intention to make sense, without any of the absence of communication that would occur if a listener misunderstood a speaker's attention to mean. In music, it is not essential for listeners or performers to understand the creator's intended syntax or even the intended meaning, as long as they can find a syntax and their own meaning in the music. (Blacking 2004: 10)

What is implied in such a statement is a lack of exact meaning on the part of listeners. Though music is denotative, it does not work in the same way as language to achieve denotation. Listeners play an active role in constructing the meaning of a song and different people may have different interpretations of the same song. As to be discussed in Section 6.4.3, the understanding of the audiences of the song *Aiqing zhuan yi* 爱情转移 (2007) [Love Moves] differs from the intention of its lyricist Albert Leung. An important aspect of musical experience is highlighted here: we (composers, performers or listeners) all hear music and process it in our own ways from different perspectives, which in turn means that we can disagree as to its meaning. In Susam-Sarajeva's words (2008: 192), our lack of understanding of the intended meaning (of either the music or the lyrics) may not spoil our enjoyment of the music. Based on a tentative study of children's early experience of television and popular music, Lury (2002: 294) suggests that children readily tolerate and accept the nonsensical and incomprehensible lyrics in popular music. What's more, as children grow into adults, they may continue with this way of engaging with music. These arguments suggest that lyrics do not always play an essential role and it is entirely possible for listeners to enjoy a song without knowing the language in which the

lyrics are written.

That said, it is conversely argued that more value should be placed upon lyrics. According to Hieble (1958: 235), for instance, singers are not polyglots and most Europeans prefer to enjoy musical and theatrical performance in their mother tongues.<sup>12</sup> Thus, singing in a foreign language deprives the singers of their best performance and allegedly constitutes a hindrance for the audience to capture the spirit of the work. Translations hence play a very important role in such context. In a similar vein, Newmark suggests that the translation of lyrics is necessary for evoking emotional responses in the listener, as evidenced in his words “personally I do not think one can appreciate or understand vocal music of any kind without knowing the words and texts well” (2003: 65). Connell and Gibson (2003: 132) equally point out that one important reason underlying the use of local languages for foreign music is the need for comprehensible lyrics in one’s listening experience.

Leaving aside the demand for translation on the part of target singers and listeners, Mateo (2001: 39) points out that sometimes, it is the ‘source culture’ that initiates the translation. According to her (ibid.), there was a legal document titled *The 1931 Act* in the history of Spain, which promoted translating Spanish operas into other European languages as a way of garnering foreign recognition for the national art and ultimately the country. This is also true of song translation, as not all songs are necessarily translated in response to the demands of the target audiences. With the commercialisation of song production, finding a large audience becomes indispensable to the music industry’s aim of profit maximisation (Frith 1987). To put it another way, language accessibility is important in commercial pop music, which facilitates the music companies and singers to tap into a new market and reach a broader audience, an issue I will return to in examining case studies in Chapter 6.

Regarding the discussion on whether a song needs to be translated or not, it is not the objective of this study to participate in the debate. Rather, my focus here is to

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<sup>12</sup> Admittedly, Hieble’s article is not current. However, it is cited here mainly because it takes into consideration the foreign language capabilities of singers, which is rarely discussed in other literature.

find out the motivations behind translating or not translating the songs. Thus, I find the differentiation between logocentric and musicocentric attitudes towards vocal translation made by Gorlée illuminating in this aspect:

While logocentrism, a view defending the general dominance of the word in vocal music, may be called by the aphorism *prima le parole e poi la musica*, musicocentrism is expressed in its opposite, *prima la musica e poi le parole*. Musicocentrism is, for all practical purposes, a wordless approach. Not surprisingly, strict logocentrism is a rather weak position within the study of vocal music. (Gorlée 2005: 8, original emphasis)

According to Gorlée, “the relative artistic weight and importance given to either element of the double symbiotic construct [poetic and musical texts]” (2005: 8) can certainly influence the choice of whether to translate a song or not. This, together with the aforementioned arguments by Blacking (2004), opens up interesting questions around equivalence and the manipulation of meaning, which are pertinent to the current thesis. Thus, it is fruitful to explore the reasons why certain songs are translated and whether there are any other variables between logocentrism and musicocentrism. In particular, for those in support of song translation, how to translate a song has become just another issue, which is the focus of the next section.

### 2.2.2 How to Translate Songs

One reason why song translation has received less than adequate scholarly attention, according to Susam-Sarajeva (2008: 189-190), is largely due to the methodological and multidisciplinary challenges involved in song texts in combination with other mediums. In comparison, translation scholars feel more at ease with purely textual analyses. Peyser (1922: 359) compares the translator of an



opera, a song or a choral work to one who toils in a straitjacket, thus, this section seeks to draw upon existing research with the purpose of unraveling the constraints on song translators and their corresponding ways in which they translate songs.

Nida's words (1964: 177) reveal more details about the problems encountered in translating song texts:

The translator of poetry without musical accompaniment is relatively free in comparison with one who must translate a song — poetry set to music. Under such circumstances the translator must concern himself with a number of severe restrictions: (1) a fixed length for each phrase, with precisely the right number of syllables, (2) the observation of syllabic prominence (the accented vowels or long syllables must match correspondingly emphasized notes in the music, (3) rhyme, where required, and (4) vowels with appropriate quality for certain emphatic or greatly lengthened notes.

As evident in the above quotation, a song is compared to sung poetry and the song translator cannot ignore the constraints imposed by the pre-existing music such as rhythm, note-value, stress and phrasing. Kelly (1987: 25) advises that a good translation of a popular song should respect the rhythms, find and respect the meaning, respect the style, the sound, the choice of intended listeners and the original version. Xue (2002: 26) argues that a song translation cannot be said to be successful unless the lyrics can be sung in the TL. Prescriptive requirements with a dual emphasis on reproducing both the musical elements and lyrics have been imposed upon song translators in the above mentioned studies, as the bulk of them are concerned with what a song translator should do or what can be counted as 'good' translations. In the following discussion, let us look at more closely how practitioners handle the problems in a less rigid manner.

From the perspective of *skopos* theory, Low propounds the Pentathlon Principle

for producing singable translations, which is defined as:

A deliberate balancing of five different criteria – singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm and rhyme. This balancing should be central to the overall strategy and also a guide to microlevel decision-making. Translators are warned against any *a priori* view that identifies a single feature of the source text as absolutely sacrosanct: the more margins of flexibility available, the greater chance of a successful result. (Low 2005: 185)

Drawing an analogy with the Olympic Pentathlon Games, Low's approach considers 'singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme' as a whole and advocates seeking the optimum overall effect of the five parameters by making compromises based on the song's features and the purpose of the TT. In fact, Low's five criteria have been touched upon in the literature mentioned earlier, but under the Pentathlon Principle, the translator has more flexibility in dealing with the losses and gains of different aspects of a song in respect of its intended function. It is worth pointing out that some of his criteria will be adopted to help with the descriptive analysis of the song examples in subsequent chapters.

Franzon (2005) makes a distinction between two notions *fidelity* and *format*, suggesting that song translation is a selective, purpose-dependent task. According to him, "[f]idelity (of some kind) is what distinguishes a translated song from all-new lyrics to old music. Formatting is what may transform a useless (literal) lyric translation into a singable and performable one" (ibid.: 266). In other words, fidelity is to keep as much as possible of the entire verbal components of the ST during the transfer, while formatting is concerned with the fit between the target lyrics and the musical line in order to make it functional on stage. A song translator thus negotiates between the narrative content and the presentation form of the song.

Continuing with the functionalist insights, Franzon (2008: 373) identifies five

options available to song translators, namely leaving the song untranslated, translating the lyrics literally without setting them to music, writing new lyrics to fit the original music, translating the lyrics and altering the music accordingly, and adapting the translation to the original music.

There are multiple purposes of song translation. However, they generally fall into two broad categories, i.e. literal renditions of ST for comprehension without matching the TT with the pre-existing melody, and singable translations for performance where the translator has to make compromises between the textual meaning and constraints imposed by the rhythm, pitch, harmony or the stresses of the music, etc.

However, as mentioned earlier, with regard to producing singable translations, the practice of covering foreign songs with varying degrees of deviation has become increasingly commonplace over the past two decades in China. Admittedly, the phenomenon is not unique to China. Albrecht claims that the pattern of “creating new words for an old song” exists in folk music all around the world (2010: 187). Haupt identifies two methods of translating German popular songs, specifically “those which completely change the original text” and “others which try to reproduce the source text and only make minimal changes necessitated by musical constraints” (as cited in Kaindl 2005: 237). In a similar vein, Stölting states translators either merely preserve the melody and completely change the subject of the song or retain the original theme of the song (as cited in Kaindl *ibid.*: 238). Up to now, the practice of replacing the lyrics of foreign songs with entirely new words has already received attention from researchers and practitioners. Fernández (2015), for instance, based on the English cover versions of the Belgian singer-songwriter Jacques Brel’s songs, exemplifies that translating songs is not limited to the textual level but can extend to discursive and non-textual practices. Fernández’s article also brings to the fore the function of the cover songs within their artistic settings. Nevertheless, Low argues that writing semantically-unrelated lyrics to go with foreign melodies surpasses the

boundaries of TS, as can be seen:

This matter of sense still deserves high ranking, however, simply because we are talking about translation – interlingual translation. I note in passing that some people ignore sense altogether: they take a foreign song-tune and devise for it a set of TL words which match the music very well but bear no semantic relation with the ST. While this may at times be good and appropriate, it is not translating, because none of the original verbal meaning is transmitted. Such practices have no place in discussions of translation. (Low 2005: 194)

On the contrary, Franzon (2008), Susam-Sarajeva (2008) and Yeung (2008) present a more flexible and open attitude. Susam-Sarajeva points out (*ibid.*: 189) that the prevalence of these practices provides fertile ground for studies of intercultural communication or social and cultural practices in a given target system. As already mentioned, writing new lyrics is counted by Franzon as an option for a song translator (2008: 373). This is because for him (2005: 263), if the song translation is made to be sung on the stage, the emphasis is on the “contextual-functional” rather than “surface-level textual” semantic features. In other words, the musical structure and singability of the song have been retained, achieving the fidelity in terms of stage and musical effects. A more flexible and inclusive view of song translation would be more suitable in my study, as the practice excluded from the scope of translation by Low plays a crucial role in today’s Chinese-language music industry (Ng 2003; Lei 2007). Through translation, either in its entirety or in part, or simply retaining the melody only, the music repertoire of the target country can be enriched with the imported new genres. Studying cover songs as a form of song translation is therefore a way of bringing to the fore “an enormous quantity of texts that are not called translations but that in fact play a key role in our contemporary societies” (Lambert 2006: 142). Moreover, Low’s argument precludes new ways of seeing and understanding what forms translation can take. Hence, the current study would

benefit from a much more open framework for examining how foreign songs have been imported into China in different ways. Admittedly, the importation of foreign songs through cover versions and its popularity raises pertinent questions about ‘fidelity’ and ‘equivalence’ in TS. ‘Proclaimed equivalence’, a notion brought up by Theo Hermans (2007) in his book *The Conference of the Tongues*, together with Tymoczko’s cluster concept (2007), is useful in explaining this issue. Therefore, I am going to briefly discuss these two notions in the next section with the purpose of widening the remit of the current study.

### **2.3 A Widening Remit of Song Translation**

Hermans’ notion of equivalence refers to “equality in value and status”, which cannot simply “be extrapolated on the basis of textual comparison” (2007: 6). Instead, equivalence is imposed on texts through “an external intervention in a particular institutional context”. That is to say, equivalence is “proclaimed, not found” (ibid.). But paradoxically, “upon authentication, translated texts become authentic texts and must forget that they used to exist as translations” (ibid.: 9-10). Put another way, once the sameness or equivalence of a translation has been declared, it ceases to be a translation on a par with its source. Instead, it turns into an original and authentic piece. The concept of equivalence proposed by Hermans is not so much an “inherent feature of relations between texts” (ibid.: 24), but primarily a matter of status. With detailed descriptions of the English translation of *Book of Mormon*, 72 translators translating the *Septuagint*, multilingual EU treaties and self-translations, Hermans illustrates that authentication can take various forms. Equivalence is ultimately achieved only if people accept such authentication. To better understand Hermans’ points, it may help to have some concrete examples to show how Chinese songs stand equal to their originals.

Let us return to the Korean song *Gangnam Style*. With ‘Gangnam’ signifying Seoul’s most affluent district linked with lavish life, the Korean song offers a vivid

description of the people who relentlessly pursue upscale fashion and extravagant lifestyles.<sup>13</sup> A Taiwanese singer performed *Gangnam Style* in Chinese in the second season of *Dream Choir*, a television show broadcast on CCTV in December 2012.<sup>14</sup> Except for retaining the title ‘Gangnam Style’ and the English phrase ‘Hey, sexy lady’, the Chinese lyrics differ considerably from the original. In the Chinese song, the setting is relocated to areas south of the Yangtze River<sup>15</sup> and therefore, the Chinese lyrics have thematic emphases on the scenery, food and folk life there. Even the horse-riding-like dance moves have been changed into boat-rowing dancing in order to show the scenery of the water towns along the Yangtze River. The performance became an instant hit on the Internet and later both the media reports and comments by music fans called the adapted song the Chinese version of *Gangnam Style*.<sup>16</sup> In this example, the mainstream TV channel, an influential platform, plays a crucial role in authenticating the Chinese song. This was particularly clear when the singer openly announced on the stage, “I adapted the Korean song and wrote new Chinese lyrics in order to reflect our own Chinese style”.<sup>17</sup>

Another alternative way to endow the Chinese songs with equal status as the originals involves the record companies’ marketing and promotional strategies. For instance, *Je m’appelle Hélène* (1993) is a French song which has enjoyed enormous popularity in France. When the Singaporean singer Joi Chua 蔡淳佳 released her cover version titled *Yilian* 依恋 [Affection] (2007), Warner Music Group stated in the promotional documents of the album that Joi Chua was the only one in Asia to

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<sup>13</sup> Cha, Frances (17 August 2012). “[Interview: PSY on ‘Gangnam Style’, posers and that hysterical little boy](#)” (last accessed 10 January 2013).

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iKiOnuTkK4> (last accessed 10 January 2013).

<sup>15</sup> The phrase ‘areas south of the Yangtze River’ is the translation of the Chinese word ‘*jiangnan* 江南’, a transliteration of the Korean word ‘Gangnam’.

<sup>16</sup> Relevant reports can be read at <http://finance.gucheng.com/201212/2254649.shtml> and <http://et.21cn.com/tv/zongyi/2012/12/30/14221455.shtml> (last accessed 10 January 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Such information was revealed to the audiences by the singer in the live performance, available at [http://www.iqiyi.com/w\\_19rr3hc0xl.html](http://www.iqiyi.com/w_19rr3hc0xl.html) (last accessed 20 January 2016)

have won the official authorisation to record the French song in Chinese.<sup>18</sup> Although the Chinese lyrics have little to do with the French ones in terms of semantic meaning, Chinese people equate the song with the French original. The two examples elucidate Toury's view that "a 'translation' will be taken to be any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such" (1995: 20). In other words, no longer restricted to the linguistic equivalence between the ST and the TT, Herman's notion of equivalence shifts our emphasis away to the social recognition and acceptance of a text as translation.

This argument is also in line with Tymoczko (2007: 54-106), who argues that translation can be understood as a cluster concept following the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of game (1953). According to her, doing so "allows for self-definition of translation as a central form of cultural practice in each society, and it accommodates the incommensurability of terms for \*translation in the world's languages" (ibid.: 98). As a cluster concept, translation cannot be simply defined on the basis of necessary and sufficient conditions. Rather than set out some rigid rules about what does and does not constitute translation, translation is an open practice that has no closed boundaries, only different possibilities. Viewing translation as a cluster concept emphasises the similarities and relationships, thus enlarging the scope of TS to include more divergent and blurred practices, such as adaptation or other freer types of translation. Much the same can be said about song translation. As we have seen in Section 2.2.2, there is no single correct way to translate a song, urging a rethinking of some basic aspects of translation in the context of songs. In order to study song translation in its variety in both its processes and products, I would suggest widening the remit of song translation. In the next section, we shall look at how to develop a more inclusive conceptual framework of song translation with a set of terms for describing the variety of existing translation practices. From this, I hope to chart a new analytical direction.

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<sup>18</sup> Information is available at <http://ent.163.com/07/0713/13/3J9LMQSS000327RF.html> (last accessed 19 January 2016).

## 2.4 The Conceptual Framework of Song Translation

The discussion in Section 2.2.1 problematises the concept of meaning in song translation. As Eckstein suggests, music “works on very similar premises as language does, the only difference being that musical discourse is marked by a greater degree of arbitrariness” (2010: 73). The arguments in support of non-translation of songs suggest that the way in which listeners interpret the meaning of a song is not necessarily dependent on the semantic meaning of the lyrics. For example, if Blacking (2004) is to be believed, seeking closeness to the original song in terms of meaning can become irrelevant. Wall (2003: 134-136) suggests that the meaning in popular music may differ from that in other media cultures, which may be wider than the ‘messages’ that a song conveys. Thus, he proposes to associate the musical text with its cultural context, and the meanings attributed to the music by listeners. This breadth of meaning, I think, partially leads to the fuzzy boundaries between translation, adaptation and rewriting in relation to music as mentioned earlier. The blurriness between translation, adaptation and rewriting is not new in TS. As Bassnett argues, “Much time and ink has been wasted attempting to differentiate between translations, versions, adaptations and the establishment of a hierarchy of ‘correctness’ between these categories. [...] All texts are translations of translations of translations [...]” (2002: 84-85). Conversely, Milton (2009) views translation and adaptation as two closely related but fundamentally different processes. Susam-Sarajeva (2008: 189) expresses that it is impossible as well as undesirable to pin down where translation ends and adaptation begins in non-canonized music, such as in popular music or folk songs. The concept of meaning in relation to music is so rich and many-faceted that it is difficult to explore it in all its complexity. For the convenience of framing my analysis of song texts, I risk reducing the complexity and clarifying the overlaps and differences between these notions. To specify, I place lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting in tangential connection with the original songs all within the conceptual framework in this study, under which, I see ‘song



translation' as an umbrella term for all kinds of transfer in the context of songs.<sup>19</sup> I will refer to each of them in turn.

#### 2.4.1 Lyrics translation

When asked about what 'translation' is, it has been observed that the general public equate the term to either using one language to say something in another language or expressing meaning in different languages (Hermans 2013: 75). Though incomplete, people's responses reveal a certain truth about translation, which concerns how we understand the term 'meaning' and what is actually translated. In the book *Semantics: the Study of Meaning*, Leech (1981: 12-23) classifies meaning into seven types: *conceptual* meaning (what the word refers to, mainly dictionary definitions), *connotative* meaning (the communication value of a message which goes beyond its purely conceptual content), *social* meaning (relating to the social context of the language use), *affective* meaning (personal feelings and attitudes of the writer/speaker), *reflected* meaning (which arises when a word has multiple conceptual meaning), *collocative* meaning (how words regularly appear together within certain contexts) and *thematic* meaning (what is communicated in terms of ordering focus and emphasis). Nida and Taber (1969: 56) discuss two types of linguistic meaning: referential/denotative and connotative/emotive. The referential meaning deals with words as signs or symbols, which is generally thought of as the dictionary definitions. The connotative meaning relates to the emotional responses to words by the participants in a communicative act. There are many other definitions of the term 'meaning', yet both the work of Leech and Nida suggest that a distinction shall be made between conceptual/denotative and connotative meaning when conducting semantic analysis.

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<sup>19</sup> It has to be acknowledged that my classification of the categories of song translation was inspired by Low's ideas (2005; 2013).

However, when it comes to the issue of semantics in music, music is said to be hyper-connotative in nature, which lacks denotative meaning and has intense power to elicit “cognitive, cultural, and emotional associations” (Hesmondhalgh and Born 2000: 32). This resonates with our previous discussion, i.e. a song is open to different interpretations. Although lyrics constitute an important dimension of a song’s meaning (Bicknell 2002), how listeners interpret a song is not necessarily reliant on the lyrics as they may be affected by the conceptual content of the song, the musical setting or a symbiosis of both words and music. Given the dynamics of a song’s meaning, it becomes even more challenging to explore what is actually translated in cross-cultural dissemination of songs. Nevertheless, it is still possible to arrive at a certain level of agreement regarding what gets translated by following ‘prototype theory’. As discussed by Tymoczko (2007: 90-98), utilising prototype theory as a way of categorising translation assumes translation has a hierarchical structure. There can be some more representative ideas and practices at the centre with other less prototypical practices at the periphery.

If we look back on our discussion in Section 2.2.2, the textual meaning of a song or original verbal meaning seems to be a more central exemplar in scholarly discussion of song translation.

In terms of different ways of translating a song in practice, it is common for lyrics to be translated in a literal and semantically-close way as much as possible, as is the case with recording inserts or brief introductions to songs. In comparison with the musical elements, lyrics are semantically expressive and thus have explicit denotative values. In this regard, although it seems contradictory to reduce the complexity of the song’s meaning to lyrics, literal renditions of lyrics can be seen as a prototypical and primary way of translating songs. Thus, following a ST oriented perspective, such as the definition of translation given by Catford as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)” (1965: 20), the term ‘lyrics translation’ in the current study

refers to a literal rendition of the lyrics. It will concern itself with the purely linguistic dimension of a song.

#### 2.4.2 Adaptation

There exists an intricate link between adaptation and translation. Houllind casts doubt on the nature of adaptation by questioning “Is it a kind of translation at all, or is it something entirely different?” (2001: 127). Nord (1991: 28) states that every translator adjusts or adapts the ST to the target culture (TC), and thus translation always involves the act of adaptation. Hu (2003) puts forward his translator-centred approach to TS and describes translation as adaptation and selection. In contrast, it is suggested that adaptation should be distinguished from translation, as the former is more inclined to focus on intralingual and intersemiotic issues rather than linguistic aspects of a communicative act (Hanssen & Rossholm 2012; Milton 2009; Wong 2012).

In the book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon argues that “when we call a work an adaptation, we openly announce its overt relationship to another work or works. It is what Gérard Genette would call a text in the “second degree” (1982: 5), created and then received in relation to a prior text” (2006: 6). Proceeding from the dictionary meaning of the word “adapt”, which means “to adjust, to alter, to make suitable”, Hutcheon (2006: 7-8) further discusses adaptation as a process or a product. When seen as a process of creation, then to adapt a work means that it undergoes the process of “(re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation”; or if viewed as a process of reception, adaptation signals an intertextual link with the adapted work, which makes us aware of its being a palimpsest of the original; if viewed as a product, adaptation can be understood as an announced transposition of a pre-existing work, which may involve medium shifts, genre switching or contextual changes.

Following Hutcheon’s idea, we can say one may already have a pre-existing work in mind when discussing adaptation, in a way similar to how we conceive of

translation. The authority of the original work and the ensuing assumption for the adaptation staying faithful to the original work tends to lead us to ignore the fact that an adaptation is a piece of work in itself. Invoking Hutcheon's own words, an adaptation should be deemed as "a work that is second without being secondary" (2006: 9).

Bastin (1998) distinguishes adaptation from translation, with the former defined as 'a set of translative operations which result in a text that is not accepted as a translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text of about the same length' (as cited in Baker & Saldanha 2009: 3). Acknowledging that adaptation is more frequently utilised when translating certain genres such as drama, advertisement and audiovisual products, he claims that "if remaining faithful to the text is a *sine qua non* of translation, then there is a point at which adaptation ceases to be translation at all" (ibid.: 4). In other words, relevance rather than faithfulness is the key word in our discussion of adaptation. Bastin (ibid.: 4-5) further offers a list of procedures as to how adaptation can be carried, including word-for-word reproduction of partial text, omission, addition based on the source information, substitution of culture-bound terms by equivalents in the TL, replacement of outdated information by modern counterparts, recreation of a context that is more familiar or appropriate for the receiver, and creation which merely captures the essential message.

This shows the complexity of adaptation, which usually looks beyond purely linguistic issues in the communication process. Adaptation can be employed in order to achieve situational equivalence. For instance, culture-bound elements in the SL can be replaced by ones in the TL which are more familiar to the recipient. Sanders asserts in her book *Adaptation and Appropriation* that adaptation constitutes an "attempt to make text 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating" (2006: 19). Even though neither Hutcheon nor Sanders explicitly talk about how adaptation is related to

translation, their discussions of adaptation have demonstrated the close relationship between the two activities, which both enhance the target readers or audiences' reception of the text in a different cultural or temporal context.

In light of these discussions, I would argue adaptation, in my thesis, refers to a way of interpreting a song, which allows certain deviations from the original in lyrics' meaning for communicational purposes while trying to maintain its link with the original song. Generally speaking, adaptation tends to take place in seeking singability of a song in the TL, which demands more liberty than a literal translation of the lyrics. As Al-Azzam and Al-Kharabsheh point out, "the skopos of rendering a song may not necessarily be communicating the *content*; rather, it could be singability, rhythm and rhyme" (2011: 562, original emphasis). Put differently, constrained by the non-linguistic features of a song such as rhyme and number of notes of the melody, the translator may adapt the lyrics (or melody in some rare cases) in order to achieve the functionality of the song so that it can be performed in the TL. The term also covers the circumstances that song texts may be omitted or shortened, or when certain segments can be altered or substituted with local ones, due to cultural differences.

#### 2.4.3 Rewriting

When it comes to rewriting, this term is usually understood in Lefevere's sense, who defines rewriting as "the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work" (Lefevere 1982: 4). Later, Lefevere has theorized translation as "the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting, and [...] it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin" (1992: 9). Such rewriting intends to adapt the foreign text to conform to the receiving culture's dominant ideology and poetics. Seen in this light, adaptation and rewriting are interrelated. Nonetheless,

with regard to the prevalence of the practice using melodies from existing songs and writing new lyrics from scratch, I want to discuss rewriting beyond Lefevere's line of thought in this study. In particular, I would approach the term in relation to appropriation.

Sanders states that appropriation and adaptation are conceptually different with the latter signifying "a relationship with an informing source-text or original" whilst appropriation "frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (2006: 26). In other words, with its source properly credited, an adaptation may involve omissions, additions or rewritten texts, yet it does not sever its relationship completely with the original work. Vandal-Sirois and Bastin (2012: 34) stand up for Sander's differentiation between adaptation and appropriation. To them, an adaptation preserves a strong link to the ST while an appropriation voluntarily circumvents or cut its link with the ST.

Musical appropriation usually means taking elements from the existing repertoires as the basis to compose new works. As argued by Middleton, it is always the melody which gets appropriated and used for various purposes such as singing, whistling and dancing, as melody is music "at hand" (1990: 96). Similarly, in song translation, musical appropriation can take the form of mainly using the melody of a foreign song. The target lyrics may preserve only a single word, a few phrases or several lines from the original lyrics (Franzon 2008).

Bastin (2009) pinpoints that adaptation should be clearly separated from 'deliberate interventions', which he refers to as appropriation, imitation and manipulation. Continuing to use Bastin's idea, I would deem rewriting in my study as a type of intentional deviation. That is to say, some of the deviations could have been avoided in the process. One could have obtained a higher degree of accuracy or faithfulness in semantic equivalence but deliberately opted for writing new lyrics from scratch.

As mentioned in Section 2.2.1, how a translator conducts a ‘vocal translation’ can be influenced by their logocentric or musicocentric position. In this regards, rewriting can be seen as a form of musicocentrism, which freely writes lyrics to the existing melody, thereby voluntarily distancing the new song from the original. As rewriting intends to create a new piece in its own right, the original lyrics may cease to assume much significance, separating it from lyrics translation or adaptation. Therefore, rewriting in my study would emphasise the creative, stylistic and linguistic aspects of lyric writing in the TL. If adaptation is used to tackle cultural differences and fully realise the communicative potential of the original song, I would deem rewriting more likely to be driven by commercial and artistic needs, where artists take the source materials for their own use, as is the case with many cover songs.<sup>20</sup> One example is the Hong Kong music industry in the 1970s and 1980s, which produced many Cantonese cover versions of English and Japanese songs due to lack of creative human resources and a large demand for musical commodities. Regarding these cover songs, their lyrics were often completely different from the original songs (Ogawa 2004).

Another parameter to distinguish rewriting from lyrics translation and adaptation is how the text presents itself or how people label their works, in the sense that whether the album information explicitly shows who translated, adapted or wrote the lyrics. This is in line with Bastin’s idea that “appropriation, imitation and manipulation may imply a shift in authorship” (2009: 6). To some extent, lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting can be distinguished by statements such as ‘translated by...’, ‘adapted by...’ or ‘words by...’. That is to say, how songs are labelled is suggestive of how the people involved in song translation perceive their work. For instance, if the packaging of a song specifies that lyrics are penned by someone, it confers full authorial status upon the person. The leeway of an author’s

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<sup>20</sup> It has to be pointed out that not every cover song severs its relation with the original in terms of semantic bonds. A cover song might employ the strategies of translating several lines or adapting some terms.

interpretation of a certain idea is generally broader than in the case of translation or adaptation.

Let us return to the example of *Gangnam Style* here. Not only did the Taiwanese singer explain to the audiences in the live performance why he altered lyrics completely to depict China's local milieu, but also claimed the authorship of the Chinese lyrics. Admittedly, *Gangnam Style* may be an unusual case due to its popularity in China, where listeners are already aware of its Korean origin; however, many other Chinese songs with completely new lyrics set to melodies of foreign songs have been received as musical works originally composed in Chinese (an issue we shall explore in Chapter 6).

#### 2.4.4 Version

Before concluding my discussion of lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting, I should like to briefly explain the term 'version', which has similarly been disputed. One might have noticed that in previous sections, the term 'version' is always used by me when mentioning a Chinese song as the translation of a foreign language song. In the *Dictionary of Translation Studies*, 'version' is defined as a 'term commonly used to describe a TT [target text] which in the view of the commentator departs too far from the original to be termed a translation' (Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997: 195). Bassnett similarly suggests the term 'version' implies a "degree of variation from the source text so that a 'translation' might be perceived closer to the original" (as cited in Krebs 2014: 75). John Hollander argues that when the term 'version' rather than 'translation' is used, much emphasis tends to be placed on "the unique properties of a particular rendering in question" (as cited in Shuttleworth & Cowie 1997: 195). If that is the case, what are the unique properties of the TT then? Hollander's view sounds somewhat abstract. Admittedly, when talking about 'version', for example, a dubbed version and a subtitled version of a film, or different language versions of the same treaty, or different versions of the same foreign novel translated by different



people, one can refer to a particular form or variation of a pre-existing entity. Again, if we follow Herman's (2007) idea of 'equivalence' as equality in status, these different versions are on a par with each other. Hence, I would like to argue that the term 'version' in my thesis refers to an independent text that is not necessarily negative or secondary. In other words, there is no indication in the term that it shall be perceived as different from the original from the outset. Rather, the term 'version' covers lyrics translation, adaptation or rewriting of songs. Any differentiation or judgment shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

#### 2.4.5 Summary

This discussion has underscored the complexity of the subject matter and the difficulty of defining lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting. All three types of intertextual activity entail creative processes but represent different forms of transfer, making the three notions blurry and overlapping. The concept 'lyrics translation' in my thesis features a narrower focus on the equivalence in terms of the semantic meaning of the lyrics. Adaptation resembles translation in the sense that it is also concerned with the fidelity or relevance to the original considering the original's anteriority, but may not be confined to the semantic meaning. Adaptation embodies a greater degree of correlation between STs and TTs than rewriting. Rewriting denotes most liberty in dealing with the lyrics. There can be no trace of a ST in a rewritten song as sometimes it is a deliberate way of creating a new piece of music via appropriating materials from foreign songs.

Unquestionably, it is difficult to make a decisive separation between the three concepts as there are many Chinese hybrids manifesting varied relationships with foreign songs. Thus, it should be noted that such distinctions shall not be put in exclusive opposition. It is hoped that by placing these three types of activities within the scope of song translation, my analysis can better reflect the diversity and present a realistic picture of the object of study. After having discussed the differences

between the three related concepts, how, then, can one account for these disparities or the plurality of possible approaches? What factors have an impact on the shaping of a song translation? In the next section of this chapter, we will discuss Bourdieu's sociology of practice as the chosen theoretical framework to help us find the answers by examining the factors influencing the creation, reception and functioning of song translations.

## **2.5 The Sociology of Bourdieu and Its Relevance to Song Translation**

A micro-level analysis of source lyrics and target lyrics is important in shedding light on the translation strategies adopted. As seen in the previous section, I have clarified some key terms in order to better conduct textual analysis of song translations. This section, in response to my attempt of taking a sociological approach to contextualise song translation activities at the macro level, engages in a detailed discussion of Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production and relevance to both translation in general and song translation in particular.

Integrating ideas from sociology into TS has gained great momentum in the last ten years, although there have been some earlier attempts to describe and understand the social dimension of translation activities. As early as in 1972, Holmes mentioned the possibility of developing "a field of translation sociology" (1972/1988: 72). With the subsequent emergence of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), translations have become gradually associated with their wider socio-cultural contexts. Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, for example, places translated literature beyond the text level into its target culture. Translated works are conceptualised as dynamic and hierarchical systems by Even-Zohar, as they correlate with each other "(a) in the way their source texts are selected by the target literature...and (b) in the way they adopt specific norms, behaviours, and policies" (Even-Zohar 1990: 46). Similarly, by shifting the focus to contextualising translations from the perspective of source-orientedness and faithfulness of the end products, Toury's translational norms

(1995) can be said to have taken a sociological stand (Meylaerts 2008). Furthermore, after the ‘cultural turn’ in TS during the 1990s, more emphasis has been laid on studying translation from cultural, historical and ideological perspectives. Lefevere (1992) also views translation as a kind of social practice, especially in his discussion of ‘patronage’ and ‘ideology’ which brings to the fore the role of people and institutions during the ST selection and the translation process.

Admittedly, there exist some similarities and overlaps between the aforementioned approaches to TS and a Bourdieusian perspective, as they all touch upon the social nature of translation to some extent, and represent a move towards an analysis of contexts rather than texts. However, Bourdieu’s theorisation gives further consideration to the translatorial agency and the resultant translator-centredness. In comparison, Even-Zohar’s work, as a case in point, has been questioned by Hermans (1999: 118) who argues that the system is too abstract and appears to work as if on automatic pilot. That is to say, the theory of polysystem downplays the involvement of translators.

It is worth mentioning that many music sociologists are interested in the relationship between music and society and some of them have already drawn upon Bourdieu. For instance, Prior (2008 & 2011) uses Bourdieu’s legacy to analyse how social change has a bearing on our relations with musical forms. As noted by Prior, Bourdieu’s notion of taste, in particular, has been commonly employed by sociologists of music to explain social stratification and music consumption. This does offer us insights into that people’s tastes of music are inseparable from the social groups that they belong to and their socialisation processes, as well as the correlation between musical preferences and issues of power and social inequalities. This analytical framework, however, could not fully capture the reality of how listeners embrace global flows of songs today. That is to say, although it is common for songs to have their words entirely replaced and to be appropriated and used in geographically and culturally disparate locations, such a phenomenon is rarely

addressed in music studies from an interlingual perspective. The focus on music has always been on monolingual and monocultural settings. In order to look into the obvious interface between music and translation and any linguistic mediation in its transnational flow, we need disciplinary supplementation. As Minors aptly enunciates, translation “plays a variety of roles in the arts, particularly within a musical context” (2013: 1). Hence, the thesis intends to draw together pertinent conceptual strands from Bourdieu and previous research to more fully understand how songs continue their life across time and space and how we can translate within musical contexts.

Deploying Bourdieu’s approach to the current study means that emphasis is not only given to the translations, but also the role of people and institutions involved in the translation process. This consequently highlights the type and extent of interactions between the agency and structure. In addition, Inghilleri (2009: 282) suggests that sociological approaches to translation can be helpful in studying literary, non-literary, spoken texts and sign language interpreting, thereby expanding the primary focus of analysis beyond literary texts. Hence, this thesis adopts a Bourdieusian perspective as a more integrative tool for analysing song translation activities in China. Accordingly, I have to establish a theoretical understanding of the concepts central to Bourdieu’s thought, as we shall see below.

### 2.5.1 Pierre Bourdieu’s Core Concepts

As a member of society, an individual cannot function in isolation, with no interaction with others. People, however, have different positions in the society, resulting in various inter-personal relationships. To account for these social relations, there exist two seemingly opposite perspectives in social sciences research, i.e. *subjectivism* and *objectivism*. *Subjectivism* reduces the social world into individual interpretation whereas *objectivism* follows Durkheim’s idea of “treating social facts as things” irrespective of people’s subjective perception of the social facts (Bourdieu 1984: 244). Bourdieu, refuses such a dichotomy and claims that society should be

viewed with a dual focus on the subjective representation of human agency and objective social structure. In order to overcome the subjectivist-objectivist division, he thus introduces the notions of ‘field’, ‘habitus’ and ‘capital’ into sociology without “falling into the determinism of objectivist analysis” (Bourdieu 1993: 6). In the following part, I will proceed with an analysis of Bourdieu’s key notions and their implications for the current research.

#### 2.5.1.1 Field

According to Bourdieu (1993), any social world consists of a set of fields such as economy, academy, arts, education, politics and culture. In other words, a field refers to a social space where people and institutions interact with each other and conduct certain activities. A field defined by Bourdieu is “a veritable social universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted” (1993: 164). Each field has its own laws and regulations governing its agents but simultaneously is interrelated with other fields. Fields are also “systems of relations that are independent of the populations which these relations define” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 106). This implies that the focus is not on individuals but the network of the social relations.

For Bourdieu, “to think in terms of field is to think *relationally*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 96). For example, the relationship between field and capital has been elaborated on as follows:

I define a field as a network, or configuration, of objective relations between objectively defined positions, both in their existence and in the determinations they impose on their occupants, agents or institutions, through their present and potential situation [...] in the structure of distribution of power (or capital) types whose possession controls access to specific benefits that are at stake in the field,

as well as through their objective relations regarding other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). Every field implies, and generates through its own operation, belief in the value of the bets it offers. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97)

A field can be therefore viewed as a hierarchically structured system or organized group of social agents occupying different positions inside, with some social agents being subordinate to others. Due to such power differentials, a field is thus full of struggles and competitions on the part of agents to gain field-specific capital and further improve or consolidate their positions of power. Seen from this light, it is those struggles within the field that constitute its own dynamic change (Bourdieu 1993: 40-43).

Regarding the relevance of Bourdieu's 'field' to TS, Gouanic maintains that it provides "a social explanation of the role of institutions and practices in the emergence and reproduction of symbolic goods" (1997: 126), which is missing from the Polysystem theory and DTS. Field can help the researchers to describe the interaction between institutions and human agents in the translating process in a concrete manner, therefore better accounting for the complexities of cultural phenomena. Despite the usefulness of the concept of field, opinions vary on what is a 'translation field'. Simeoni addresses that the field of translation can be constructed only if some preconditions are satisfied, as shown in his terms "the pseudo- or would-be field of translation" (1998: 19). This, according to him, results not only from translators' internalized subservience and passivity, but also from the transience of the translation activities. Heilbron points out that translation exists in various forms and contexts, including political and diplomatic interpreting services, subtitling and dubbing for media programs, and some other specialized forms like legal translation and technical translation. Thus, translation should be analysed "within the field or the subfield in which it actually functions" (1999: 431). This is in

line with Gouanvic's emphasis that translation activities always take place in different fields rather than constitute an independent field itself. This is illustrated through the following extract:

Admittedly, Bourdieu does not include translated texts in his theory of fields. There is, among others, a very simple reason for this. Far from constituting a field of their own, translated texts are submitted to the same objective logic as the indigenous texts of the target space. (Gouanvic 2002: 160)

Wolf (2007: 109) claims that Bourdieu's 'field' doesn't suffice for the conceptualization of a 'translation field', and uses Homi Bhabha's theorem of the *Third Place* as a complement. This, according to her, is because a social field enjoys a high degree of autonomy. In contrast, translation activities are constantly changing and are subjected to norms of other relevant fields, such as literary and religious fields. Thus, translators' positions are always secondary to the original author.

However, Inghilleri (2003: 245) voices a different view, arguing that translation and interpreting should be regarded as a professional practice with their own specific logic and rules. Though they are closely tied to other fields, translators and interpreters share a common set of rules and values unique to their group. Sela-Sheffy (2005: 10) acknowledges the difficulty to define the translation field, but introducing the notion of field into TS can help to account for the cultural dynamics embodied in translation activities.

Ultimately, compared with other fields such as literature and arts, it is relatively difficult to circumscribe the boundaries of a translation field. This may be due to the fact that translation itself (here we talk about interlingual translation) is intercultural and transnational communication which can involve agents from various other fields. Consequently, the relations may be more complicated in translation activities, which enjoy less independence than other fields. However, I would argue that translation

activities can still be regarded as a relatively autonomous field, in which agents involved in the process such as translators, publishers, clients, sponsors and critics have their own unique interpersonal and hierarchical networks. After all, Bourdieu also notes “each field is *relatively* autonomous but structurally homologous with the others” (1993: 6, my emphasis).

Nowadays, the discipline of TS has grown into an independent one with many global professional organisations for translators established. Examples such as the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies and the Translators Association of China (TAC), are a clear sign that TS is increasingly becoming autonomous and can be conceived of as a field in regards to Bourdieu’s theory.

#### 2.5.1.2 *Habitus*

According to Wacquant (2004), ‘habitus’, with its origin in Aristotle’s philosophic thought, was reinterpreted by Bourdieu and became another key notion of his social reproduction theory. With *field* looking into the objective social structure, *habitus* draws attention to agents’ actions in social practices, which has to do with the values and dispositions of the agents interacting within the field. For Bourdieu, *habitus* has been conceived as “a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action” (Bourdieu 1990: 13). Habitus is therefore essentially the way in which the structural principles of the social world are embodied in the individual, which shapes our thoughts and actions. In other words, habitus is “society written into the body, into the biological individual” (Bourdieu 1990: 63). One’s dispositions develop through his or her ongoing process of socialization such as family upbringing in the formative years, schooling and daily interactions with other agents. Thus, habitus can reflect the social histories where it is internalised by the agent, such as class, education and gender. John Thompson elaborates on this concept, as he defines habitus as:



A set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions, and attitudes which are “regular” without being consciously coordinated or governed by any conscious “rule”. The dispositions which constitute the habitus are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable. (Thompson 1991: 12)

This illustrates that habitus is lasting and durable as the dispositions are formed over a long period of time and are inscribed in the biological body. They manifest in the way people speak, stand, think and make choices in one’s life. Nonetheless, habitus, although largely unconscious, is mostly a guiding force rather than actually determining how individuals act and respond in daily life. Habitus is transferable, as well, which means that one tends to think and act in a similar and consistent manner even if located in a different setting.

Being both a structured and a structuring structure (Bourdieu 1984: 167), habitus, a product of history and social world on the one hand, can prompt the agent to transform and reshape the structures of the field by generating certain thoughts and actions on the other hand. Seen from this angle, habitus and field are mutually constitutive. The very concept of habitus sheds light on the interplay between the individual’s mental and behavioural patterns and the external social structures.

In the translation field, the habitus of a translator can be reflected in his or her translation behaviour. The translator’s habitus can be understood as the “(culturally) pre-structured and structuring agent mediating cultural artefacts in the course of transfer” (Simeoni 1998: 1). Since Toury (1995) introduced the notions of norms into TS, there has been a growing interest in exploring the relationship between translators and norms. Thus, it is very tempting to correlate Bourdieu’s habitus with Toury’s norms. We have seen attempts by researchers to combine and interpret the two concepts. For instance, Simeoni (1998: 8) argues that translators’ submissive

behaviour is not innate but results from their adherence to translation norms over a long time. The internalization of subservience gradually mediates the translator's translation practices and in turn enforces the norms. The subtle relationship between norms and habitus is also discussed in Inghilleri's work (2003). She (2003: 249) states that interpreting is 'a norm-based, socially constituted activity', and pinpoints the role of the different habitus amongst agents in shaping the interpreting practice. Sela-Sheffy (2005: 7-8) observes that although veteran translators and novices in the field of Israeli literary translation both tend to use ancient Hebrew lexicon and style instead of modern Hebrew literary language, the two groups have different aims. The former group aims to preserve the Hebrew culture as gate-keepers while the latter group wants to stand out among their peers by being revolutionary and innovative. This example shows us that seemingly similar translation actions may spring from two totally different cultural dispositions. This further unveils that the translatorial habitus can better account for the disparity of the translation acts than norms. To clarify, unlike the norm theory which focuses on describing the regularities of behaviour, habitus is more concerned with the dynamics underlying the field, including what kinds of habituses different agents (including translators, publishers, governments and other social institutions) have and how they interact with others in order to change or maintain the status quo of the field. After all, habitus is not fixed or static, it can be further developed and reformed through later experiences in different contexts.

Habitus is, however, internalised and abstract, and therefore cannot be observed directly. This brings about a methodological puzzle regarding how to investigate a person's habitus. Hence, more thoughts should be given to issues like what is habitus exactly; to what extent and through what kinds of data can one's habitus be revealed (Farnell 2000: 402). It should also be noted that the translatorial habitus does not merely interact with the translation field but also with other interlocking fields. As pointed out by Meylaerts (2008: 94-95), translators are all socialised individuals and

therefore, their attitudes, perceptions and practices are shaped by the dynamic interplay of various habituses which internalize broader social, cultural and political structures. Hence, the habitus of a translator shall not be viewed as a merely professional one. Rather, it is “the elaborate result of a personalised social and cultural history” (Simeoni 1998: 32). Furthermore, there are many cases where “translators are simultaneously writers, critics, lawyers, philosophers...” (Meylaerts 2008: 95). In this light, habitus is not only dynamic but also plural, an issue which we need to bear in mind in our application of Bourdieu’s theory.

### *2.5.1.3 Capital*

According to Bourdieu (1993: 40), an actor seeking to enter a field must be equipped with certain resources particular to that field or ‘capital’ in Bourdieu’s term. Agents occupy different positions in the field, and this is also determined by their control of resources and the amount of capital they possess. The definition of capital for Bourdieu is broader than what we generally think as the one introduced in economics. Capital exists mainly in three forms: economic capital, which refers to money, property rights and other tangible material possessions; social capital, which can take the form of a person’s membership to a certain group, social obligations or network connections; and cultural capital, which includes educational qualifications, knowledge about customs, tastes and any other culturally valued goods. All these three forms of capital can be converted into symbolic capital associated with prestige, authority and public recognition.

Besides the above-named kinds of capital which are frequently mentioned in the literature, it is worth pointing out that Bourdieu also mentions ‘academic capital’, which he refers to “the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school (the efficiency of which depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family)” (1984: 23).

These different types of capital are not fixed but allow transformation between each other. For example, cultural capital can be acquired through economic capital, such as investment in schooling and education. In turn, academic qualification or cultural competence may earn a job in the labour market for its owner and further confer on the person some money value (Bourdieu 1997: 46-58). Conversely, a person may be unable to enter a certain social circle unless he or she has certain legitimate qualifications. For example, one can be qualified to be a doctor only after years of medical training and experience.

Like field and habitus, capital is also characterised by inequality and difference. Some people may possess high volumes of economic capital but little cultural capital whereas others are endowed with more social capital yet somewhat scant of capital in other forms. Such unequal distribution of capital positions agents in different ways within a field. In order to improve or defend their positions, agents struggle to attain the field-specific capital, which impacts and potentially redefines the structures of the field. In this sense, to study a field is to explore the capital of the agents involved in that field.

Lefevre (1998) applies specifically Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital into his diachronic study of the English translations of *The Aeneid*. According to him, the cultural capital does not only transmit the information and knowledge but also helps people get accepted by certain 'right circles' of the society, thereby enhancing the distribution of the translations. In his empirical studies of literary translators, Gouanvic (2005: 162) mentions that translators enjoy different symbolic capital, either transferred from the influential original work, technical knowledge through training, or specialization in a certain field. This indicates that in our analyses later on, whether the original work can increase the recognition of its translator or the translator can create symbolic capital for the original author should be examined on a case-by-case basis.

#### 2.5.1.4 *Illusio and Doxa*

Drawing an analogy between his ideas and game, Bourdieu (1990: 119) refers to *illusio* as the feel for the game and belief that it is worth playing. Such a belief may be held by those who have already taken part and had a stake in the game. As Bourdieu suggests, "... one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is" (1990: 67). One may readily accept that the struggles in the field are worth participating in without questioning the legitimacy. However, if one lacks the feel for the game, it is quite unlikely for him or her to maintain interest and willingly invest in the game.

Whilst using *illusio* to signify one's interest and investment in the game, Bourdieu brings up *doxa* to mean "commitment in the presuppositions of the game" (1990: 66). In his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu expounds the term as whatever is taken for granted in any given field of the society. It is what makes "the natural and social world appears as self-evident" (1977: 164). *Doxa*, in his view, is "what goes without saying because it comes without saying" (ibid: 167). Hence, *doxa* helps to suggest what is deemed acceptable, appropriate and legitimate. It is the mainstream and unquestioned forms of behaviour and activities in the field. Anything which falls outside this is the *heterodoxa*. New entrants to the field, who may come with another set of different dispositions, tend to challenge the consensus and taken-for-granted assumptions held by existing members in the field. Such interaction between the *doxa* and *heterodoxa* also constitutes part of the dynamics in the field.

#### 2.5.1.5 *Summary*

The discussion presented so far has briefly reviewed the sociology of Pierre

Bourdieu. His concept of field refers to a social space with its own laws of functioning, where agents are constantly engaged in struggles for specific stakes and interests. By doing so, agents try to maintain or transform the structure of the forces that is constitutive of the field. The idea of tension and competition is therefore the essence of Bourdieu's concept of field. Agents are endowed with a certain habitus, which is acquired from different socialization experiences, and in turn, informs and frames the way in which they act and behave. Field and habitus are thus mutually bound. Bourdieu's concept of capital, which can be manifested in various forms, is what essentially makes the game worth playing. The agents' struggles for the field-specific capital underlie the dynamics of the field.

It is suggested that Bourdieu's notions such as 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital' have to be understood in a holistic way 'within a system of relations' rather than in isolation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 96). Regarding the application of Bourdieu's sociology in TS, Gouanvic states that translation activity is a "sociology of the text as a production in the process of being carried out, of the product itself and of its consumption in the social fields, the whole seen in a relational manner" (2005: 148). These two points of views suggest that we cannot get a holistic picture of a certain piece of translation work unless we situate it within its specific context of production and consumption. Concerning how to analyse a certain field, Bourdieu suggests three necessary steps, i.e. to "analyse the field vis-à-vis the field of power", "map out the objective structure of the relations" between the competing agents or institutions in the field, and "analyse the habitus of the agents" (ibid.: 104-105). The structure of the field is determined by the capital owned by the agents. Different habituses are in constant interaction, which dynamically changes the field. Thus, in order to fully account for song translation as a socially situated practice, it is important to explore the relationship between the field of song translation and the field of power, identify the forms of capital, as well as the social trajectories of the agents. I will move onto discuss the insights taken from Bourdieu's ideas for the current research.

### 2.5.2 Implications for Studying Song Translation Activities in China

Following a Bourdieusian perspective, song translation can be viewed as a field, which has its own set of regulated principles but at the same time can be influenced by other interlocking fields.

The field of song translation in China has been closely connected to the field of power, particularly as manifested in the case of the song translator Xue (which will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4). This is primarily due to the politicization of cultural activities in mainland China. As Mittler explicitly states, “music and government politics in China run on parallel plane” (1997: 41). A typical example is the Yan’an Talks on Literature and Art in 1942 delivered by Mao Zedong, the head of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at the time. As evidenced in Mao’s words “literature and art are subordinate to politics, and yet in turn exert enormous influence on it” (as cited in Mittler 1997: 30), one cannot ignore the influence of political power on art production. When it comes to song translation, selecting what kinds of songs to be translated can be deemed as a political choice during certain periods of Chinese history. For instance, as said by Xue, a bulk of foreign songs introduced to China before the 1950s were revolutionary mass songs themed on struggle for freedom, patriotism, and proletarian causes (2002: 199-204). This was indispensable to the Chinese Civil War between 1927 and 1950 and the Anti-Japanese War spanning from 1937 to 1945. According to Xue (*ibid.*), especially after 1937, when the war against the Japanese invasion broke out, a few literary and art workers went to Yan’an of their own accord, the seat of the CPC at that time. At that time, they wanted to use literature and art as a powerful tool for uniting and enlightening the people to struggle against the enemy, thereby pushing the revolutionary work forward. Some of them had an excellent flair for the Russian language, music and literature, which enabled them to translate many songs from the former Soviet Union. As a means of lifting the morale of the troops, singing these songs was substantially promoted in the revolutionary bases among the Chinese

soldiers. From this perspective, translating songs was intended to serve political and ideological purposes of the government.

It has been a different scenario since the mid-1980s when the political climate in China has become comparatively relaxed because of the government's more liberalised cultural policies (Liu Ching-chih 2010; Manuel 1988). Today, songs are produced primarily for mass entertainment and commercial gain. In Mittler's words (1995: 72), besides the previous "political patron", the market joins in the musical game. Against this backdrop, song translation activities in the country have become closely interrelated with the economic field. Hence, the audiences' likes and dislikes have to be taken into consideration.

If we incorporate capital to the issue under study, social capital can be the social network where translators are embedded, which may include initiators of translation, publishers, singers, music critics, original composers and their affiliations with certain associations or organisations. Language skills, culture-specific background knowledge, music knowledge and translation experience can be conceptualised as cultural capital for a translator. Nowadays, many of the people who are active in introducing foreign music into China are lyricists or composers<sup>21</sup> (we shall see more details in Chapter 6), who (may not) know the foreign languages but hold a great deal of artistic capital. Compared with translators, they are likely to be part of a superior social network within the industry. It may therefore be easier for them to get permission and make licensed recordings.

Frith argues that "star performers began to take over from composers as popular music's 'authors'" (2004: 113). It is true that the prominence always falls on singers. On the contrary, translators are more likely to be ignored. Xue (1993) criticises that the translators' names are all absent in some collections of translated songs. The examples cited by him are *Dangdai zhongwai liuxing gequ daguan* 当代中外流行歌曲大观 [A Collection of Contemporary Chinese and Foreign Popular Songs]

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<sup>21</sup> This conclusion is reached on the basis of the names on the recordings and their corresponding biographies.



published by *Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe* 中国国际广播出版社 [China International Broadcasting Publishing House] in 1990, and *Xinbian zhongwai youxiu shuqing gequ liangbaishou* 新编中外优秀抒情歌曲两百首 [A New Collection of Excellent Chinese and Foreign Ballads] published by *Heping chubanshe* 和平出版社 [Heping Press] in 1988 (Xue *ibid.*). To some extent, the fact that the names of the translators have been removed signals editors' disrespect towards translators' efforts. Besides a comparatively invisible status in Venuti's sense (1995), few young people are willing to embark on a career as a song translator due to low income and the difficulties inherent in this special type of translation (Xue 2002: 218). Thus, I shall try to account for how people and institutions are positioned in relation to one another within the field of song translation and what forms of capital they bring into the field and are fighting for.

Another noticeable phenomenon is that more and more music fans are engaged in translating songs on the Internet (to be discussed in Chapter 5). With no economic remuneration for their time and efforts, they should nevertheless consider the game of translating songs worth playing. In light of what we have discussed so far, I will need to examine the social structures as different social organisations and institutions are involved in song translation at different times. How the agents' dispositions have been shaped by the social structure and in turn, influence their individual practices is another focus of my analysis in subsequent chapters.

The fact that certain people in the field of translation refuse to regard rewriting lyrics as non-translation, as seen in Section 2.2.2, is an example of people struggling over setting the boundaries and *doxa* for the field of song translation. This raises questions as to who occupies the position to legitimise the behaviour, exercise control over the admission of new comers into the field of song translation as well as the exclusion of others. We will look into this issue in detail in Section 6.4.

To sum up, habitus is fluid and dynamic in nature (changing with the age, education and experience of any involved agent in the social world throughout time). Habitus of a translator thus impacts the way translation is practised, which is closely

linked to the dynamics of the song translation field. Based on my classification of different ways of translating songs in Section 2.4, Bourdieu's sociological work can help me to explore and identify the field's occupants (who are respectively engaged in the three modes of song translation), their different positions in the field, the capital at stake (the capital possessed, exchanged and sought after by different agents), and the resultant struggles between different agents, as well as influences of other fields on this particular field of cultural production (they can be manifested in the texts selected or commissioned to be translated, the translation strategies adopted, and the reception of the translated songs).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I set out to review existing literature on song translation with special emphasis on the contending views on whether songs need to be translated and how. Given the fact that the lyrics of some songs have been rendered faithfully while others are adapted or completely substituted, there is an apparent need for developing an encompassing framework for discussing the diverse practices. Adopting Herman's notion of 'equivalence', I have justified my way of broadening the scope of song translation. Within such a more inclusive framework, I have further demonstrated how lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting can be differentiated from one another drawing on Bastin's idea of 'adaptation' and Sander's view on 'appropriation'. Lyrics translation is viewed in a strict sense, which refers to a semantically close representation of lyrics; adaptation allows more freedom but does not sever its link with the original; rewriting is using the foreign melodies as a melodic base and composing new lyrics for artistic needs. Although the three concepts are inextricably linked, the attempt of making a differentiation and developing a conceptual framework is helpful in clarifying the scope of my study. This will ultimately help me with the comparative textual analysis in subsequent chapters.

It is acknowledged that textual analysis is necessary to any study on translation

practices, yet translation cannot be separated from the social conditions in which the translation process is embedded. Hence, this thesis adopts a sociological approach. A detailed theoretical discussion of Bourdieu's ideas has been presented. Broadly, his main notions are field, habitus, and capital. The amount of capital impacts on the agents' positions in the field, which in turn drives them to accumulate more capital and strive for dominance. It is the contentions and fights over various kinds of capital, or the position-takings, that make the field dynamic and constantly changing. The final section of this chapter examined the theoretical implications of Bourdieu's sociology for studying song translation as a social practice. Thus, this chapter provided a conceptual and theoretical framework for analysing and understanding song translation activities in China. The next chapter considers the suitable methodology for exploring the structure and dynamics of the song translation field.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

As seen in the Chapter 2, much of the early research on song translation is undertaken by practitioners who have put forward sets of detailed rules with a strong focus on how to translate songs. The co-existence of various ways of processing foreign songs, together with the prevalence of cover songs, stands in contrast to such a rigid prescriptivism. Thus, one primary aim of the current thesis is to describe and explore how and why different approaches have been employed in rendering foreign songs into Chinese. In Section 2.3 and 2.4, I have attempted to provide a conceptual map for discussing the different relationships between the Chinese songs and their foreign originals. Based on that classification, my focus here is to elaborate on the case study method, which is fit for carrying out the current research and fulfilling the research purposes. The chapter proceeds by first reviewing what is said about case study in both generic social science research methods literature and translation studies literature. Issues such as the rationale for choosing the methodology, how to select cases and collect appropriate data using paratexts and netnography for analysis, will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

### **3.2 An Overview of Case Study Methodology**

As one prime research tool used within the domain of social sciences, the case study method can help to gain depth into a phenomenon by focusing on a small number of samples with substantial contextual information. As Susam-Sarajeva (2009: 37) indicates, partly influenced by the development of DTS, case studies are frequently used in TS in order to investigate into real-world translation events without making normative and prescriptive judgments. Let us now look more closely at some common definitions of case study in social sciences. Gillham describes a case as “a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be

studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw” (2000: 1). Yin offers the following definition of case study, which is an in-depth empirical inquiry about “a contemporary phenomenon set within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2009: 18).

Following the same line of thought, Susam-Sarajeva defines a case as “a unit of translation or interpreting-related activity, product, person, etc. in real life, which can only be studied or understood in the context in which it is embedded” within the discipline of TS (2009: 40). These three definitions shed light on a major characteristic of case studies, i.e. a strong focus on contextualisation and naturally occurring phenomena rather than artificial constructs. Koskinen suggests that “it has rather become a truism to say that translations do not take place in a vacuum that they need to be interpreted and evaluated in their relevant context” (as cited in Saldanha & O’Brien 2013: 205). That is to say, research within TS has become increasingly context-oriented. Against this backdrop, the case study is appropriate for studying translational phenomena which have to be viewed in context. As Neubert (2004) observes, this research method enables the researcher to make intensive analysis of the research object rather than merely linguistic comparisons between ST and TT.

Revisiting the research questions listed in Section 1.3 lends further support to use of the case study method for the current study. As emphasised by Yin (2009: 6), case studies are particularly useful for generating more explanatory information and exploring questions of *how* and *why*, rather than simply statistical frequencies. Moreover, there is little control over the actual behavioural events when “how” and “why” questions are being investigated into in natural settings (ibid: 7). As I have no control over the contextual aspects of the song translation activities such as agents’ actual behaviour in the field of song translation, the selection of the songs and their reception, the case study method is adopted for exploring the impact of socio-cultural

determinants on the translation activities.

Nonetheless, case study has often been questioned for its validity for making generalisations beyond the single case to a wider population (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Simons 1996). Others voice a different view in defence of case studies arguing that the transferability of the finding is feasible (Lincoln & Guba 2000). Yin (2009) suggests that case studies work better in terms of analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. Stake argues that they are useful in providing

full and thorough knowledge of the particular, recognizing it also in new and foreign contexts. That knowledge is a form of generalization too, not scientific induction but *naturalistic generalization*, arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings. (1978: 6, original emphasis)

With regard to the research results which can be derived from case studies, Susam-Sarajeva (2001; 2009) suggests that multiple-case studies have considerable advantages over single-case studies in terms of the wealth of different perspectives and the rigour of the conclusions. Getting the research design right is therefore another central concern in undertaking case studies. Yin (2009: 46-60) discusses four basic types of case study design along two dichotomous dimensions, namely, single- or multiple-case studies, holistic or embedded. The main difference between a single case study and a multiple one rests in whether there is more than one case placed under scrutiny. If the case examines one unitary unit of analysis, it is a holistic design. Conversely, examining various sub-units of analysis beyond the global aspects of the case makes it an embedded one. Yin (ibid.: 50-51) suggests that an embedded design may be preferred over a holistic one as the latter is more abstract and less focused. Furthermore, multiple-case studies are advantageous to single-case studies in terms of more compelling evidence, increased generalisability and better analytic

conclusions (Yin: 60-61).

Regardless of which case study design is adopted, it is necessary to note that defining the unit of analysis or the case should be taken into consideration at the outset. As pointed out by Susam-Sarajeva (2009: 41), there is a tendency in TS to take examples rather than cases as units of analysis, as not all the information of an extensive case study can be displayed due to space limitations. This could result in a biased selection of the data which best support the researcher's arguments. Hence, one needs to exercise caution in identifying the unit of analysis. In accordance with aforementioned Susam-Sarajeva's (ibid.: 40) definition of 'case' in TS, a case in the present study can be song examples translated in different periods of time, foreign songs or people involved in the translation activities, etc. However, in order to fit in with a sociological approach, people and networks involved in introducing foreign songs into China are chosen as the three specific cases in my study. Having discussed the overlaps and differences between lyrics translation, adaptation and rewriting in Section 2.4, I seek to follow the conceptual model to make each case comparable with one another to pursue their similarities as well as differences. Thus, the study will involve more than one case. A professional song translator,<sup>22</sup> amateur translators, and a lyricist are identified as cases in my study, as they are primarily engaged in translating, adapting or rewriting foreign songs (See more details in Section 3.3). The translation strategies of different agents, the song materials translated/adapted/rewritten and the socio-cultural settings can be regarded as subunits of analysis. Therefore, a multiple-case study with embedded single cases is adopted for the present research.

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<sup>22</sup> It is normally conceived that a translator always translates a great variety of genres of texts. However, Xue Fano has been primarily involved in translating songs in his whole life. He might have translated other kinds of texts, but he rose to fame for translating songs. Many media reports also call him a great song translator (*gequ fanyi jia* 歌曲翻译家), rarely mentioning his translation activities in other spheres (if there are any). In order to highlight his focus on song translation and his achievement, I use the term 'a professional song translator' to address him, as amateur translators have been included in the current study as well.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, China's large-scale song translation activities span around one hundred years from the 1920s with various songs in different genres and different languages translated into Chinese, such as Christian hymns, revolutionary songs, folk and pop songs. Rather than attempt to cover such a broad timespan, it would be more productive to concentrate on a much shorter period. Given the feasibility of a manageable study within the timeframe of the PhD period and the difficulty of accessing materials (such as the translators' statements for songs) in the more distant past, the study thus focuses on contemporary song translation activities in China since the late 1980s in an effort to refine the scope of the thesis. In particular, the digitalisation of music has a measureable impact on how Chinese consumers access, distribute and listen to foreign songs. A study of the current state of song translation in China would equally provide me the opportunity to look into this issue more closely. Furthermore, pop music translation thus far has received little attention from scholars despite that pop music dominates today's transnational spread of songs with a wider audience. For instance, the rarity of relevant research has been acknowledged by Kaindl:

Popular songs are important mass media products through which cultures are articulated and hence communicated to people of different linguistic, historical and cultural backgrounds. Notwithstanding their presence, popular songs have largely been neglected in translations studies. (Kaindl 2005: 235)

From this perspective, the current study will first showcase some historical facts of song translation activities in China over the 20<sup>th</sup> century before focusing on a more recent period. It is worth pointing out that apart from Anglophone pop music, which enjoys a dominant role in global music market, Japanese and Korean pop music have begun to find a large audience in China since late 1990s (Connell & Gibson 2003: 65-66). However, the actual comparative analysis of the song texts will prioritise



Chinese songs translated from English ones, which seems to have its limitations. This is mainly because the scope of this thesis and the author's limited command of foreign languages dictate that an exhaustive in-depth analysis of linguistic and cultural elements in many language pairs is impractical. Nonetheless, it has to be pointed out that song examples from other languages will not be completely discarded in the present research. Songs in Russian, French or Korean, for example, will still be included for detailed analysis when depicting relevant contextual and historical information.

Based on the aforementioned considerations, I have chosen Xue Fan, on-line communities of amateur translators and Albert Leung as three cases. The following section provides more detailed background information about individual cases.

### **3.3 The Three Case Studies**

Having justified the reasons for carrying out multiple case studies for the current research, this section will briefly discuss the specific cases selected for detailed examination.

#### **3.3.1 A Brief Introduction to Case study 1: Xue Fan**

The main reason for choosing Xue as a case is that he is China's most renowned and prolific song translator. Born in 1934 in Shanghai, Xue Fan is a member of the Chinese Writers' Association, Chinese Musicians' Association (CMA), TAC and the Council of Sino-Russian Friendship Association. He also serves as a guest professor at Shanghai Normal University.<sup>23</sup> His love of music and words has acted as an important incentive for him to devote himself to song translation for his whole life. Xue has been translating songs for over 50 years with an output of over 2000 songs (Liao 2010; Ni 2014). The most influential one is *Mosike jiaowai de wanshang* 莫斯科

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<sup>23</sup> This information is obtained from Xue's own personal webpage <http://www.xuefan.net/jianjie.asp> (last accessed 27 August 2015).

科郊外的晚上 [A Night in the Suburb of Moscow] (1957) translated from Podmoskovnye Vechera (or *Подмосковные Вечера* in Russian) (1956). According to Zi (2003), because of his outstanding contribution to translating Russian songs and promoting the Sino-Russian friendship, Xue has received many awards from the Russian Government. For example, in 1997, he received a Friendship Commemorative Medal, a symbol of the country's greatest honour, from the former Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Two years later, another China-Russia Friendship Memorial Medal was conferred on him. In 2007, the Principal of the Moscow State University, on behalf of the Russian Federal Government, presented a gold medal in honour of Nikolai Alexeevich Ostrovsky<sup>24</sup> to Xue. In this respect, Xue enjoys a wider fame compared with his peers.

As implied in Section 2.2, Xue's book is important in terms of its historicisation of song translation activities in China and detailed discussion of specificities associated with translating foreign songs into Chinese. This can offer us significant contextual information for a subsequent in-depth analysis of contemporary translation activities, which is the focus of the present research. Given Xue's representativeness, analysing his concrete translation examples can shed light on the translation strategies commonly adopted by his peers. Moreover, using him as a case may have the potential to uncover whether certain conditions change over time, such as whether different songs are selected for translation and what socio-historical determinants may have influenced the practice of translating songs in different periods of time.

### 3.3.2 A Brief Introduction to Case study 2: Online Communities of Amateur Translators

It is widely accepted that Internet has been playing an increasingly

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<sup>24</sup> He was a famous Soviet socialist realist writer, best known for his novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1936).

indispensable role in people's daily life since its advent, particularly after it entered the Web 2.0 era. Introduced by O'Reilly (2005), the term 'Web 2.0' highlights the phenomenon that websites and online platforms have been developed for the user and also by the user, as reflected in his lines "harnessing collective intelligence" and "trusting users as co-developers". In other words, people no longer just browse different web pages for information and resources but also actively create diversified content to be distributed over the Internet.

Internet industry has witnessed soaring development in China. According to the figures from the 34th Statistical Report of China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC) on Internet Development in China (2014), the estimated Internet user population in the country had reached 632 million as of June 2014.<sup>25</sup> Against such a backdrop, the Internet has spawned a multitude of grassroots translation activities where Chinese music fans are keen on understanding and sharing the meaning of their favourite foreign songs. They either translate the lyrics in a literal way or subtitle the MVs of foreign songs.

O'Hagan suggests that TS "can no longer afford to overlook the fan translation phenomenon" (2008: 179). As to be discussed in Section 5.1, amateur translation of songs occupies a marginal position in TS. In this light, online communities of amateur translators form a particularly relevant and significant case study. Given the different ways of amateur engagement in song translation, this case involves an in-depth analysis of three types of online communities in China. They are introduced in the following section.

### 3.3.2.1 Douban

Douban 豆瓣,<sup>26</sup> as displayed in Figure 3.1, is a typical group-oriented Web 2.0

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<sup>25</sup> The report is available at

<http://www.nanjingmarketinggroup.com/blog/chinese-internet-users/cnnic-34th-statistical-report-internet-development-china> (last accessed 28 December 2015).

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.crunchbase.com/company/douban> for more information about this website (last accessed 27 June 2015).

social community launched in March of 2005. By August 2012, the site had around 62 million registered users and 290,000 groups according to statistics published by Sina Technology (2012).<sup>27</sup> On the homepage of Douban, a message reads as follows: ‘Douban came into being with the belief that word-of-mouth has a magic power over people choosing products. It is hoped that Douban can help you know someone like you through what you like and further, you can discover more excellent items through them’.<sup>28</sup> Put in another way, the fundamental development philosophy for Douban is that through the site, people can form themed groups based on their similar interests where they exchange with each other views and useful information.



Figure 3.1 Screenshot of Douban Homepage<sup>29</sup>

Douban allows group and topic tagging, which facilitates users to find common interests. Although Douban is open to both registered and unregistered users, only registered and group members can initiate or join a discussion within a group. A further point must be noted with regard to the openness of Douban groups: any registered user can create a group or join a group without the need for approval by its creator or administrator (Tang & Li, 2012; Yin 2010). This could account for the fact

<sup>27</sup> Information is available at <http://xueqiu.com/2107541144/22128644> (last accessed 27 June 2015).

<sup>28</sup> “... 口口相传的魔力一定能放大百倍... 豆瓣帮助你通过你喜爱的东西找到志同道合者, 然后通过他们找到更多的好东西。” More introduction of Douban (in Chinese) can be found on <http://www.douban.com/about> (last accessed 27 June 2015).

<sup>29</sup> The main page, <https://www.douban.com/>, updates from time to time.

that a large number of users join more than one group and the number of groups continues to rise on Douban website.

Hence, for analysing song translation activities in Douban, we need to use the tagging to find the groups which are engaged in translating songs. We will discuss the selection process in depth in Section 5.3.1.

### 3.3.2.2 Baidu Knows

Baidu Knows<sup>30</sup> or *Baidu Zhidao* 百度知道 was developed and launched by Chinese-owned biggest search engine, Baidu in June of 2005. The website, functioning as China's most successful online query-based community, provides users a platform for posing questions and getting answers from the pooled wisdom of Internet users. Questions posted on Baidu Knows cover a wide range of topics, such as Computer /Internet, Life, Health, Sports, Education and Science, Culture and Arts, etc. In this sense, Baidu Knows resembles other foreign knowledge-sharing virtual communities such as Yahoo! Answers, WiKi Answer, etc. Baidu Knows can be regarded as a supplementary tool for the Baidu search engine, as the answers will be grouped together into a new database and therefore, the information can be accessed by Baidu users with similar queries.



Figure 3.2 Screenshot of Baidu Knows Homepage<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Visit <http://www.digitalintheround.com/marketing-china-social-search/> for more information about Baidu Knows (last accessed 27 December 2015).

<sup>31</sup> The main page, <http://zhidao.baidu.com/>, updates from time to time with recommended topics and newly asked questions.

Once registered, users can log into Baidu Knows and enjoy full access to its various services. If a user has a specific question, he or she can first type the question and use the search box to locate answers related to the question. If no answer is available, the user can click ‘Submit my question to the community’ and alternatively set up a webpage for his or her question. To encourage participation and reward good answers, Baidu Knows has a system of points and levels. Hence, one can use points to elicit response from other members. It is usual that when one offers higher points, the more answers (s) he or she can obtain. However, unregistered users can only search and view questions with answers. It is suggested that the user should describe his or her question in a detailed and specific way, categorise the question appropriately to ensure a satisfying and prompt response. The question will be open to answers for normally 15 days, which can be extended using extra points. The asker then chooses the most appropriate answer from all the replies, which will deduct him or her certain points as a reward to the answer provider. Sometimes, the asker is willing to offer further points if extremely satisfied with the answer as a way of expressing appreciation. It is worth mentioning that the points one can accumulate in Baidu Knows consist of experience points and value points. Experience points are associated with a user’s level, reflecting the user’s usage of Baidu Knows and active participation in the community. The value points emphasise the user’s quality contribution, allowing the user to ask questions and enjoy certain privileges in *Zhidao shangcheng* 知道商城 [Zhidao Shop].<sup>32</sup> More information about earning the two kinds of points is provided in Appendix 1.

One’s accumulation of experience and value points directly impacts one’s level

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<sup>32</sup> This is an online shopping mall owned by Baidu Knows in order to encourage more participation. But unlike conventional shopping, in Zhidao Shop, people don’t need to pay money. Instead, people can use points they have earned in Baidu knows to exchange for the product they like or enter the Shop’s prize draws. Moreover, only users who have at least 25% of their answers selected as the best by askers are entitled to purchase products. Putting such limits is said to enhance not only the quantity but more importantly, the quality of the answers in the community, available at <https://zhidao.baidu.com/shop> (last accessed 23 January 2016).

achievements. In turn, the higher level a user attains, the more points one can get from his or her contribution to the website. Put simply, in Baidu Knows, every registered user can have different experience and value points, levels and best answer rates through participating in different activities. In Section 5.3.2, we will explore in-depth how people translate songs on the platform of Baidu Knows.

### 3.3.2.3 Video Streaming and Sharing Websites

According to Holt, the music industry took a ‘visual turn’ around 2008, by which he refers to that the “distribution, presentation and communication about music have become more visual, with video playing an important role and transforming the websphere from discursive to more audiovisual communication” (2011: 59) . In this light, more and more visually appealing videos which integrate sound and image have been produced as a way of promoting songs and artists. Turning to music consumers, we have seen a global survey by Nielsen (2011)<sup>33</sup> report that, watching MVs has become the most popular form of digital music consumption with 57 percent of 26,644 respondents across 53 countries having done so in the preceding three months when the survey was conducted in September 2010.

As shown in the report of CNNIC released in July 2013,<sup>34</sup> the number of Chinese people who watch videos online amounted to 389 million by the end of June 2013. This figure is an indicator of the booming development of China’s online video industry, as many video streaming and sharing websites offer Chinese people different services. In turn, with the nearly ubiquitous smart phones, other devices capable of recording videos and easy-to-use software editing tools, more and more people are able to produce and circulate their own videos on the Internet.

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<sup>29</sup> For more details about the survey, visit

<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2011/music-money-mobile-a-global-music-outlook.html> (last accessed 26 August 2015).

<sup>34</sup> The report is available at

<http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201310/P020131029430558704972.pdf> (last accessed 20 July 2015).

The rapid development of China's online video services, together with the changes in music production and consumption, thus provides fertile ground for MV fansubbing. To put it another way, a growing number of music fans voluntarily subtitle the videos of their favourite foreign songs, upload to video streaming websites and share with other peers. Youku 优酷 [excellent and cool] and Yinyuetai 音悦台 [the pleasure of music] are the most popular websites among fansubbers as distribution platforms.

Youku,<sup>35</sup> set up in 2006, is China's largest video sharing site, particularly after 2012 when it merged with Tudou 土豆, another top video site. Youku hosts a wide variety of videos in film and entertainment, TV shows, games, music, animation and sports. If Youku's attractiveness to users lies in its diversity and inclusiveness, it may be reasonable to say that people choose Yinyuetai for its strong focus on music. Being specialised in providing good quality and high definition MVs, Yinyuetai has grown in popularity as China's largest MV streaming website since established in 2009.<sup>36</sup> The website had over 50 million monthly users as of December 2012 and the videos on the website could generate an average of over 500 million views per month.<sup>37</sup> As revealed by the founder of the website Zhang Dou 张斗, compared with MP3 streaming, MVs are able to offer a listener an enhanced and immersive experience because of the visual representation.<sup>38</sup> Another notable feature of Yinyuetai is that users are encouraged to share MVs and interact with each other. On

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<sup>35</sup> For more information about Youku, visit

<http://thenextweb.com/asia/2014/08/20/chinas-youku-tudou-now-serves-500-million-users-per-month-half-of-youtubes-reach/#gref> and <http://www.youku.com/?screen=pc> (last accessed 20 July 2015).

<sup>36</sup> More information about the website can be found on <http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=nyWyg7nI9fCmROtL1AxhzuwqV1JZTttrmzWvE9Hyjyw92IIJuhWh9QVqM71dQzTWvNhas2SVpM6tgzahjDfxva>, <http://ying.umiwi.com/zhangdou.shtml#anchor1> and TechWeb <http://www.techweb.com.cn/xinrui/2011-02-17/881896.shtml> (last accessed 10 June 2014).

<sup>37</sup> The information was released on the 10th China International Digital Content Exposition in December 2012, available at <http://games.sina.com.cn/y/n/2012-12-15/1623677478.shtml> (last accessed 16 January 2016).

<sup>38</sup> This information is available at <http://tech.hexun.com/2011-01-10/126695430.html> (last accessed 16 January 2016).



Yinyuetai, viewers cannot only enjoy timely access to newly released MVs, but also find friends with similar interest by joining fan groups or networks. Registered users can accumulate different points through uploading videos, writing posts and commenting on others' videos, which in turn enable them to download videos. In this light, music fans play an active role in recommending music to other listeners, including subtitled videos, a point which we will discuss in Section 5.3.3.

### 3.3.3 A Brief Introduction to Case Study 3: Albert Leung

Born in Hong Kong in 1961, Albert Leung became a professional lyricist in 1986. After writing lyrics for nearly three decades, Leung, renowned as 'master of lyrics in Hong Kong', is a prominent figure in the music industry throughout the Greater China region. As Leung said in an interview,<sup>39</sup> the number of his songs registered with the copyright office has exceeded 3600. Some of the songs are cover versions of foreign songs. As to be discussed in Section 6.4 and Section 7.3.2, we can see that covering foreign songs in the local language plays an important role in the popular music scene of both mainland China and Hong Kong. Sometimes, the lyrics rewritten for existing foreign music are completely different from the original words. Some can stay close to the original style and feeling in spite of the change in language. As mentioned earlier, rewriting lyrics to be matched with foreign melodies has been rarely systematically studied from the perspective of TS. This partially results from the long-held notion of linguistic equivalence with the original text. From this perspective, rewriting lyrics as a way of producing cover versions is not a normally conceived typical mode of song translation. As Simon states, "[b]y studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal" (1996: 231). Focusing on Leung as a case can not only shed light on the functions cover songs fulfil in the production of songs but also help me to analyse the possible

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<sup>39</sup> This information is available in the 1<sup>st</sup> episode of CCTV's music documentary, available at <http://tv.cntv.cn/video/C23176/4c6652da5bfd4cea996e2c88c67f551e> (last accessed 18 September 2015).

transformations songs can undergo in today's transnational flow of music. By studying the particular, we learn something about the general. To some extent, focusing on Leung's rewriting practice in the production of cover songs can free us from the notion of fidelity and broaden our ideas of what translation can be.

It should be noted, however, that among Leung's current oeuvre of around 4000 songs, the number of songs with lyrics written by him for matching foreign melodies is relatively limited and small (see Appendix 2).<sup>40</sup> One key reason for focusing on Leung is that thanks to his fame in the music industry, there are relatively more media reports on him. After all, it is not easy to get access to lyricists and there is a generally lack of information available for understanding their behaviour and beliefs. Another reason for Leung being an interesting case is that he not only writes lyrics to help with the production of cover versions of foreign songs, but also he creates lyrics in Cantonese and Mandarin to the same melody. Susam-Sarajeva (2008: 197) indicates that research on linguistically heterogeneous lyrics is rather neglected; therefore, choosing Leung as a case can further improve our understanding of the role of self-translation and code-switching in constructing bilingual lyrics. More details on Leung's work will be given in Chapter 6.

#### 3.3.4 Summary

These three cases will be studied jointly in order to investigate the song translation phenomenon. There has been a tendency towards extending the context of research beyond the text in TS. However, it is not my intention to diminish the importance of the translated texts, given my second research question outlined in Section 1.3.1 is to describe and examine translation strategies. In other words, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the examined cases, this is a study of both texts and contexts. Following a Bourdieusian perspective, my analysis of the three cases

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<sup>40</sup> With the current number staying around 20, this may not be an exhaustive list of Leung's cover songs due to the time constraints to check all his nearly 4000 songs.

includes the study of the wide social field, the analysis of these agents working in the field, and the study of translated songs and their STs. At this point, however, how to collect enough and appropriate data from different sources to triangulate my analysis of the song examples needs to be addressed. In addition to paratextual material, netnography, adopted as a supplementary tool for collecting and interpreting relevant data, is to be explained below.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Paratextual Investigation**

It is generally accepted that Genette is the first who has systematically investigated the paratextual elements by presenting “a global view of liminal mediations and the logic of their relation to the reading public” (Genette, 1997: xx). Genette (ibid.: 5) classifies paratextual elements into two categories: *peritexts* and *epitexts*. Peritexts include features within the text, such as the cover, title, footnotes, preface, and typesetting. Elements outside the text, such as interviews, diaries and correspondence with the publisher, are grouped under epitexts.

Although Genette’s discussion of paratext centres around literature rather than translation practice, efforts have been made to explore the relevance of paratext to translation in TS (Tahir-Gürçaglar 2002; Watts 2000). For instance, paratexts can play an important role in contextualising translated texts, as “it is only in circulation that a text assumes its significance, and the paratext is perhaps the most useful site for understanding how, for whom, and at what potential cost that significance was constructed” (Watts 2000: 42-43). Kung (2013: 53) similarly suggests that paratextual materials are valuable in terms of revealing “implicit traces of ideological and socio-cultural motivation of translation agents”, which are otherwise unseen in translated texts.

To refer to my previous example of the song *Yilian* discussed in Section 2.3, it shows that paratextual elements (the way the song is marketed in the case) can guide and influence the reception of certain songs.

As mentioned in Section 2.5.1.2, habitus is an abstract concept. The lack of sufficient information regarding the behaviour and thinking of the agents in the field of song translation compounds the problem of bringing the interaction between agency and structure into a sharp focus. Paratextual elements will therefore be examined as a way of adding background information or relevant opinions of the translation commissioners, translator themselves, music fans and reviewers, thereby offering a clue about how song translations have been shaped. In the following chapters on specific cases, I will specifically deal with some paratexts such as published statements about the translators, introductions to songs, the packaging and marketing materials of the translated songs, the visual layout of CD covers, titles and subtitles, illustrations, fonts, etc.

### 3.4.2 Netnography

Put forward by Kozinets, netnography, or ‘ethnography on the Internet’ as its name implies, is defined as a “written account resulting from fieldwork studying the cultures and communities that emerge from on-line, computer mediated, or Internet-based communications, where both the field work and the textual account are methodologically informed by the traditions and techniques of cultural anthropology” (2002: 62). Simply put, netnography is a qualitative exploratory research method that enables researchers to conduct online fieldwork via a combination of participative and observational approaches.

According to Wei et al (2011), netnography differs from ethnography in that the researcher can choose to simply observe the interaction and decision-making process of the online community, which is the non-participant netnographic research. Alternatively, the research can undertake an immersive engagement with the

members of the community and participate in their decision-making process. As a non-participant method can be sufficient for data collection for the present study, I have decided to stand in as a 'lurker' and not intrude on their translation process so that all the activities can take place naturally within the community. Compared with traditional participant observation procedures, netnography is faster and less resource intensive (2002: 61) as a result of using online information available to the public.

As for my case study of amateur translation as well as the reception of some translated songs, netnography is especially suitable. Due to the anonymity and pseudonymity of general Internet users and their postings, there is no guarantee that I can approach the amateur translators in the same way as one conducts a traditional, face-to-face ethnographic study. Instead, a netnographic analysis allows me to observe over a period of time the behaviour and posts of amateur translators and music fans in the aforementioned online communities. Using Kozinets' words, the employment of netnography gives me an opportunity to use "computer mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographical understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon" by observing the amateur translation phenomenon without directly participating in the interactions between community members (Kozinets 2010: 60).

Regarding the netnographic research process, Kozinets suggests a set of procedures of conducting netnography which is similar to ethnography: research planning (delineating the research topic and forming research questions), entrée (identifying and selecting the online community), data collection, interpretation, ensuring ethical standards, and presenting findings (2010: 61). As detailed in Section 3.3.2, I have identified three heterogeneous online communities which not only relate to my research focus and question but also offer some descriptive rich data.

As suggested by Kozinets (2010: 98-113), I mainly draw upon data from the following two sources: (1) archival data of lyrics translations and subtitles of MVs

done by fans for fans; and (2) elicited data gathered from personal correspondence with amateur translators and semi-structured interviews in an informal way. Specifically, the former type of data is collected through my online observations in several publicly accessible websites and forums related to song translation. It has to be pointed out the data are not limited to translations. Postings of the translators, interesting and relevant comments of other contributors, chat messages and interaction between different fans are all taken into consideration; the latter type of data is obtained from my deeper engagement with a team subtitling MVs quite active in the community named 'LC & LD' (more details in Chapter 5). Apart from their subtitled MVs and strategies, I also conducted informal online and telephone interviews with the team in order to gain more insider information.

Admittedly, there are some problems associated with the use of netnography. As Kozinets (2010: 136-156) spends a whole chapter discussing the ethical issues of conducting netnography, an ethical approach without invading the privacy of Internet users is important to the current study. Kozinets points out:

In general, as a netnographer interacts *normally* in the online community or culture, that is, as she interacts as other members do on the site but also takes field notes of her experiences, there is no need to gain informed consent for those interactions. (2010: 151, original emphasis)

As indicated previously, I have some elicited data relevant to my research questions which is the insider information privately shared with me by the subtitling team. Normally, I may not have this chance to know such in-depth information in an online community. It thus became necessary for me to obtain the informed consent of participants in my study. That's why as soon as I established contact with the translator in the subtitling team, I revealed to him the aim of my research, my real name and academic affiliation for ethical concerns. This also increased his

willingness to participate in my research in the beginning. I also explained to the subtitling team how the materials would be used and asked their opinions concerning whether they want data to be anonymised or attributed in my writing. They were quite open to this, letting me make the decision. In order to protect their privacy, I have chosen not to reveal their real names and their whereabouts in my writing. As with the current thesis, I have also reported back to them some of my findings to show appreciation for their support to my research.

Another issue is the constantly changing nature of the online activities. For instance, sometimes, my previously stored postings were deleted by the contributor and as a consequence, I had to wade through irrelevant posts again on those social-networking websites to select other appropriate data. Due to the open-access nature of the Internet, most members participate in virtual communities hiding their real identities, and this calls into question the trustworthiness of their posts. This informs me to triangulate the netnography data with my textual analysis and paratextual investigation in the discussion about the case studies later on.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodology used to reveal and interpret how and why diverse song translation practices occur in China. The case study method with a multiple embedded case design is adopted in the study as an analytical tool. Three individual cases, a prolific song translator, online amateur translators and a professional lyricist, have been briefly introduced. Clarifications have been made with regards to what time periods, which languages and which song genres will be incorporated into the study. Paratextual investigation and netnography are briefly discussed in the ending section of this chapter. As supplementary methodological tools, they are further employed to enrich the data possibly revealing how people behave in a certain manner and the impact of the translations.

## **Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Discussion of Case Study 1: Xue Fan**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Having presented the theoretical framework and methodology, Chapter 4 turns to a more detailed analysis of the first case, Xue Fan. As seen in Section 3.3.1, Xue has been actively engaged in song translation activities in China. This chapter starts by offering further background information on Xue, which is followed by a brief review of previous studies on him. It then moves to examine his practice of translating songs, including his ideas on song translation and concrete song examples. In the final section, Bourdieu's ideas have been applied to an in-depth analysis of Xue's practice and other external factors that have played a role.

### **4.2 Brief Background Notes on Xue Fan**

Despite being one of the most acclaimed song translators in the country, Xue has experienced many difficulties in his long-term career of translating foreign songs. When Xue was less than two years old, he was diagnosed with poliomyelitis which reduced him to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Xue braved the difficulties and was able to finish high school (Wang 2007). Upon graduation in 1953, Xue wanted to receive further education and was advised by his teacher to study Russian to work as a literary translator, considering his physical disability and the promising relations between China and the former Soviet Union at that time. Xue worked diligently and successfully passed the entrance examination to Shanghai Russian School, which has now developed into the Shanghai International Studies University. Unfortunately, Xue was turned down by the School when found with severe leg paralysis on the day of registration (Meng 2006). Being rejected from receiving formal education in college came as a heavy blow to him. Nevertheless, he did not lose heart but instead chose to study foreign languages on his own, including learning Russian through



listening to radio programmes at home (Zi 2003).

Because of his close relationship with the people working at the radio station, Xue got a chance to translate one Russian song and published his first translation in a local magazine called *Guangbo gexuan* 广播歌选 [Broadcasting Songs] in 1953 (Liao 2010). It is worth mentioning that the broadcasting station offered a programme of teaching songs to listeners. One direct result was that Xue gained access to more foreign songs, further igniting his enthusiasm for translating songs to Chinese.

In an attempt to better translate songs and render target lyrics in accordance with the Chinese language traditions, Xue not only learned musicology by himself, but also the entire curriculum a Chinese-major undergraduate had to complete. Later in 1955, Xue translated and published two volumes of *Sulian gequji* 苏联歌曲集 [Collections of Soviet-Union Songs].<sup>41</sup> With *Mosike jiaowai de wanshang* gaining enormous popularity, Xue established his fame and gradually became a well-known expert on song translation (Ni 2014).

Till date, Xue has published over 40 collections of his translated songs, such as *Lading meizhou gequji* 拉丁美洲歌曲集 (1958) [Songs from Latin America] and *Eluosi mingge zhenpinji* 俄罗斯民歌珍品集 (1997) [Russian Folk Songs]. Besides his great contribution to song translation, Xue also published many articles and reviews on music analysis and foreign music, such as *Zuori huanghun: jieshao pitoushi gequ 'zuotian'* 昨日黄昏——介绍披头士歌曲《昨天》(1992) [Yesterday's Sunset: An Introduction to Beatles' Song 'Yesterday'] and *Yaogunyue zai sulian* 摇滚乐在苏联 (1991) [Rock music in the Soviet Union].<sup>42</sup> It can be argued that Xue is an important figure and using him as a case study can shed some light on China's song translation activities.

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<sup>41</sup> Information is available at <http://xuefan.net/dsj.htm> (last accessed 19 August 2015).

<sup>42</sup> A list of Xue's translated works and publications, including the ones mentioned here, is available on Xue's personal website [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=230](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=230) (last accessed 20 August 2015).

### 4.3 Previous Studies on Xue Fan

With Xue being a renowned and representative song translator in China, it is not surprising to find that among the extant research on song translation activities in China, a majority has examined Xue's experience of translating songs. Broadly speaking, relevant research falls into the following two categories:

On one hand, a large portion of the literature is devoted to depicting Xue's personal life, such as how he fought unremittingly with the hardships experienced in growing up and translating songs in spite of his disability (Li & Zhang 2006; Meng 2006; Yang 2004; Zi 2003). Admittedly, such detailed descriptions of Xue's personal life and achievement provide rich contextual information for whoever is interested in Xue's song translation activities and constitute a basic premise for exploring his translation decisions. However, to some extent, they function more like his biographies lacking analytic rigour.

On the other hand, the rest of relevant articles investigate Xue's translation strategies drawing upon concrete song examples. Some outline the strengths and weaknesses of Xue's book *Gequ fanyi tansuo yu shijian* (Hu 2007; Qian 2002; Wang 2006). For instance, Chen (2010) argues that Xue's categorisation of rhymes in his book could be more clearly defined and substantiated with more examples. Alternatively, others analyse how Xue's translation relates to its original and offer suggestions for future translation. For example, Liu and Zhao (2009) explores Xue's compensation strategies in translating English songs from the perspective of Functionalism; Liao (2009) presents a systematic analysis of Xue's theory and practice of song translation based on his personal interview with Xue in 2007; Liao (2010) further elaborates on Xue's three requirements for song translators, i.e., bilingual translation competence, literary expertise and musical talents. These aforementioned detailed comparative analyses of the source lyrics and Xue's translations are necessary. Too much emphasis on the linguistic issues, however, has left Xue's translation motivation, his selection of songs to be translated and the

reception of his translations largely unexamined.

Song translation activities in China have been subjected to constant external influences. As mentioned earlier, Bourdieu's sociological perspective transcends the objectivist-subjectivist divide, which underscores the dynamic interplay between the practices and decisions of individuals and the social structure where they operate. Hence, the remaining chapter intends to follow a Bourdieusian perspective and situate Xue's translated works in their specific historical and socio-cultural milieu. A habitus-led analysis can help us to trace Xue's social trajectory which develops and evolves in response to the changing social environment. Thus, it is hoped that this chapter can identify the reasons underlying Xue's translation strategies and decisions by exploring the interaction between Xue and other agents or institutions in the field of song translation at different stages of his translation process.

#### **4.4 Analysis of Xue's Song Translation Practice**

After giving a brief overview of Xue's life and existing relevant research, this section will move on to his methods of song translation. It will start with Xue's own definition of song translation, and then illustrate his principles with examples.

##### **4.4.1 Xue's View of Song Translation**

Xue (2002: 26) highlights that song translation should be distinguished from lyrics translation, which refers to the semantic transfer of the original lyrics in the TL while leaving the music aside. Though lyrics translation can help listeners comprehend the content of the song or analyse its linguistic features, Xue maintains that song translation needs to go beyond the linguistic level for the purpose of seeking the unity of words and music. In other words, singability accounts as the most important feature of song translation to Xue and he always translates songs to be sung. As stated by Xue, this is a critical aspect, because "songs are usually written

to be sung and if a song only stays static on the paper, it is just like a body without a soul. A song's vitality comes to the fore only in the process of being sung".<sup>43</sup>

However, one reason why few practitioners are engaged in song translation is that it requires a multi-disciplinary approach on the part of the translator. In other words, knowledge of music, language capability, and translation skills are all necessary. With respect to people's doubts about the feasibility of song translation, Xue states that it depends on what perspective we have:

If we aim to convey the subject matter, content or the artistic image of the song, then most of the foreign songs are translatable; whereas if the criterion is to transform the phonetic beauty and the sounds of the original lyrics in the TL, then all foreign songs are untranslatable given the inherent differences between different languages. However, the phonetic charm and rhyming which is lost in the process of transfer can be compensated by that of the corresponding Chinese lyrics. (Xue 2002: 38)

From this perspective, songs can be translated. However, Xue (2002: 56) argues that there are important differences between song translation and lyrics writing, as a lyricist enjoys relative freedom in choosing a narrative point of view. Song translation is a marriage of literature and music, when the translator has to capture the essence of the music as well as the words of a foreign song. This is well captured in Xue's following lines when he made a distinction between song translation and lyrics writing:

Generally speaking, composers compose melody on the basis of the lyrics,<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This is a speech given by Xue on the International Symposium on Sino-Russian Music Exchange in Harbin, China, on 21 September 2009. [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=229](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=229) (last accessed 3 July 2014).

<sup>44</sup> There are other circumstances in which the melody comes first followed by lyrics or the melody

resembling custom-making a perfect pair of shoes which fits the feet (here referred to as lyrics). On the contrary, in song translation, the original musical structure and lyrics already exist and shall not be altered, which predetermine the way how the lyrics should be presented in the TL, prompting the translator to find the only ‘Cinderella’ for the existing pair of crystal shoes. (ibid.)

Xue (2002: 65-66) elaborates on his view of finding the ‘Cinderella’ in song translation in that it is essential for a translator to evoke in the target listeners a response similar to the one experienced by the listeners of the original song. In order to produce the same effect on the receptors of the translated songs as the original listeners, priority shall be given to transmitting the artistic effect. Thus, he puts forward his understanding of ‘*tongshe yuanyi, lingzhu xinci*’ 统摄原意，另铸新词 [capturing the original meaning and creating new words] for song translation, which will be introduced next.

Xue (ibid. 219-225) states that he agrees much with some translation theories, including Nida’s ‘dynamic equivalence’ (1964), ‘*huajin*’ 化境 [the idea of sublimation or transmigration of soul] proposed by Qian Zhongshu 钱钟书 (1963), Fu Lei’s 傅雷 theory of ‘*shensi*’ 神似 [spiritual resemblance] (1955) and Guo Moruo’s 郭沫若 principle of ‘*tongshe yuanyi, lingzhu xinci*’. Qian, Fu, Guo were all famous Chinese literary scholars and writers, who also translated many foreign books. In regard to their respective theories, Qian suggests that

The highest level of literary translation is sublimation [...] A translation should be faithful to the original in a way that it reads unlike a translation. The readers do not feel the translation unnatural despite the differences in language and speech habits, while the flavour of the original shall remain intact at the same time. In other words, the translation should read as though it were a literary work

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and lyrics are created at the same time.

originally written in Chinese in its own. (As cited in Luo 1984: 696)

Fu compares translation to painting a picture, arguing that spiritual resemblance instead of formal resemblance is more essential (as cited in Luo 1984: 558). For Guo, he favoured the method of free translation with creativity by stressing that “translation is creative work, and good translation is equivalent to, if not better than, creation”. With a belief in creative translation, Guo put forward the principle of ‘*tongshe yuanyi, lingzhu xinci*’ (Yang & Wang 2012). To be more specific, on the basis of comprehending the ST, the translator can freely choose words and adjust the text structure through omission or addition, provided that the core meaning of the original work is accurately conveyed. Deeply influenced by Guo’s principle, Xue has developed a relevant view on song translation, as will be discussed below.

#### 4.4.2 Capturing the Original Meaning and Creating New Words

Applying Guo’s principle to song translation, Xue (2002: 65-66) states that song translation is not simply a process of transferring the mechanic meaning:

In terms of ‘capturing the original meaning’, the translator needs to understand not only the surface meaning of the lyrics, but also the hidden emotions, intentions of the composer and the lyricist, and the artistic images conveyed by the song. In other words, the unity of the lyrics and the music shall be respected; ‘creating new words’ is to choose the most appropriate words from the TL which transmit the original meaning of the song and fit the music. The translator is endowed with freedom to make reasonable adjustments such as rearranging the sequence of words and sentences, omitting certain minor details or adding more contextual information to seek the optimum overall effect.

Although Xue has defined the notion of meaning in the above quotation, we may still find the term ‘the original meaning’ in his principle of translating songs tricky if bearing in mind the discussion about meaning in music in Section 2.2.1. To elucidate the above-mentioned points, a song example *Meirenyao de haizi* 没人要的孩子(1984) [The Child Who is Ditched by Everyone] translated from the English song *Nobody’s Child*<sup>45</sup> will be analysed.

Table 4.1 *Nobody’s Child* and Its Chinese Version *Meirenyao de haizi*

English Lyrics of <i>Nobody’s Child</i>	Chinese Lyrics and Back- translation
As I was slowly passing an orphan’s home one day	一天我路过孤儿院，停留在园墙外 [While passing an orphans’ home one day, I stopped outside its courtyard.]
And stopped there for a moment, just to watch the children play	看孩子们在游戏，他们玩得多欢快 [I watched the children play, how happy they were!]
Alone a boy was standing and when I asked him why	那一旁有个男孩却没有理睬 [There was a boy beside them but he was ignored by others]
He turned with eyes that could not see and he began to cry	我问他为什么不去玩，他放声哭起来 [When I asked him why not play with them, he began to cry]
Refrain: I’m nobody’s child, I’m nobody’s child	谁也不要我，谁也不要我 [Nobody wants me, nobody wants me]
Just like a flower I’m growing wild.	我野生野长，像野花一朵 [I grow wildly, just like a wild flower]
No mommy’s kisses and no daddy’s smile	没有爸爸的抚爱，没有妈妈的吻 [no daddy’s love and no Mommy’s

<sup>45</sup> The song can be listened to at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcZR\\_Q18YPA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcZR_Q18YPA) (last accessed 15 August 2015).

	kisses]
Nobody wants me I'm nobody's child	我是个孤儿，谁也不要我 [I am an orphan and nobody wants me]

*Nobody's Child* is a popular song which has been covered by different singers in the UK.<sup>46</sup> As can be seen from the English lyrics, the song is about an orphan who is blind and consequently, no one wants to adopt him. According to a report on 3 May 2015 by *Xinmin wanbao* 新民晚报 [Xinmin Evening News],<sup>47</sup> Xue listened to the English song for the first time in 1984 and was moved by the message that one needs emotional support when facing hardships. Because of his sympathy with the song, he decided to translate the song for a famous university student singer to perform.

As can be seen from the Chinese lyrics, Xue made many adjustments in terms of omitting certain words or adding extra information, and changing the word order. For instance, the first line of the Chinese song reads 'While passing an orphans' home one day, I stopped outside its courtyard'. We can see that in Chinese, the adverbial 'slowly' was omitted and the phrase 'stopped there for a moment' was changed into '*tingliu zai yuanqiang wai*' 停留在园墙外 [stopped outside its courtyard] for the sake of maintaining a rhyme '-ai' in the Chinese character *wai* 外 (literally meaning outside). Xue supplemented the information '*tamen wande duo huankuai*' 他们玩得多欢快 [how happy they were] on the basis of the original words 'just to watch the children play'. According to Xue (2002: 64-65), although there is no trace of the added line in the original English song, his rendition is acceptable as it forms a sharp contrast with the following lines which convey the loneliness of the little crying boy. Moreover, this addition can be matched with the melody as there would be fewer Chinese characters in a literal translation than original musical notes.

<sup>46</sup> More information about this English song is available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobody%27s\\_Child\\_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobody%27s_Child_(song)) (last accessed 15 August 2015).

<sup>47</sup> This is a Chinese language newspaper based in Shanghai. The report can be read in full at <http://news.163.com/15/0503/14/AOMS7CK700014AED.html> (last accessed 25 January 2016).



Regarding the English words “Alone a boy was standing and when I asked him why, he turned with eyes that could not see and he began to cry”, Xue also changed some words and added extra information. Xue’s reason for such adjustment is that a word-for-word translation would sound incomplete and less logical to Chinese listeners who lack relevant contextual information (Xue 2002: 65). This is because the original English lyrics do not explicitly say what question the main character actually posed to the blind child, i.e. why he did not play with other children. Thus, Xue shifted the translation of ‘and when I asked him why’ to the second half of the line and instead added the information ‘*que meiyouren licai*’ 却没有人理睬, which means ‘but he was ignored by others’ and ends with the word ‘睬’ rhymed -ai. This addition not only helps maintain the rhyme pattern but also offers a more detailed description of the lonely child. As for the line ‘he turned with eyes that could not see’, Xue shifted it to the second and third verses.

In the refrain, ‘I’m nobody’s child’ was translated into ‘*shui ye buyao wo*’ 谁也不要我, which literally means ‘nobody wants me’. Xue (2002: 65) indicates that ‘*shui ye buyao wo*’ can trigger stronger emotional responses among Chinese listeners, as they can visually imagine a scene where the blind orphan is ignored by others and left alone, who subsequently cries out ‘nobody wants me’. Alternatively, if translated into ‘*wo shige meiyou fumu de haizi*’ 我是个没有父母的孩子 [I’m nobody’s child] or ‘*wo shi gu’er*’ 我是孤儿 [I’m an orphan], it is not easy to rhyme with the refrain. This is because not many Chinese characters can rhyme with ‘-i’ or ‘-er’ which characterises *zi* 子 and *er* 儿 respectively.

Indeed, Xue’s translation of *Nobody’s Child* cannot be said to be completely semantically equivalent to the original lyrics, as some lyrics get altered in Xue’s translation. However, the main idea of the original English song and sadness has been successfully conveyed to Chinese listeners. This is an apt example of Xue’s principle of ‘*tongshe yuanyi, lingzhu xinci*’ for song translation.

Let us see another example: *Do-Re-Mi* (1959),<sup>48</sup> a song from the musical play *The Sound of Music*, in which English homophones are used by Maria to help the children learn the musical solfège syllables more easily. Therefore, ‘Doe’ ‘Ray’ ‘Me’ ‘Far’ ‘Sew’ ‘La’ ‘Tea’ are associated with the seven notes do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti, respectively. The English song has different versions in China and now I am going to present the translation carried out by Xue and Deng Yingyi 邓映易, another influential song translator in the country. As can be seen from Table 4.2, with the minor exception of the seventh line beginning with ‘Ti’ where the word ‘jam’ is omitted in Chinese rendition, the Chinese translator Deng Yingyi translated it in a word-for-word way. The number of syllables of each line is largely identical with that of the English lyrics. The translator also takes into consideration the phrasing of music as the pause of the Chinese words is in agreement with the original rhythmic movement. The translated lyrics have maintained rhyming when necessary. Thus, Deng’s translation can be set to the original melody and is singable. However, achieving singability without sacrificing the meaning of the lyrics is not always as easy as in this example, where the purely textual translation happens to fit the musical elements.

Table 4.2 *Do-Re-Mi* and Its Chinese Translation by Deng Yingyi

English lyrics	Chinese lyrics	Back-translation
doe, a deer, a female deer	哆是一只小母鹿	Duo is a little female deer
ray, a drop of golden sun	来是金色阳光	Lai is golden sunshine
me, a name I call myself	咪是称呼我自己	Mi is a name I call myself
...	...	...
tea, a drink with jam and bread	西是茶片和面包	Xi is tea and bread

<sup>48</sup> The song’s music and lyrics are written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. The song can be listened to at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k33ZQ4I4p24> (last accessed 16 August 2015).

Table 4.3 *Do-Re-Mi* and Its Chinese Translation by Xue Fan

English lyrics	Chinese lyrics	Back-translation
doe, a deer, a female deer	(Duo)多 好朋友多呀多	I have <u>many</u> good friends
ray, a drop of golden sun	(Lai)来 快来呀来唱歌	<u>Come</u> and let's sing together
me, a name I call myself	(Mi)咪 她脸上笑咪咪	She has a big <u>smile</u> on her face
...	...	...
tea, a drink with jam and bread	(Xi)西 那太阳往西落	The sun sets in the <u>west</u>
...	...	...

Table 4.3 presents Xue's version, where the seven words 'Doe' 'Ray' 'Me' 'Far' 'Sew' 'La' 'Tea' are transliterated into Chinese. In so doing, Xue successfully retains the (near-) homophones which illustrate the sol-fa scale. However, original references have been altered altogether, like 'Do' referring to 'many', 'Re' meaning 'come' in Chinese, as seen from the back-translation. This is the main difference between Xue's version and Deng's version. According to Xue (2002: 45-49), considering the cultural differences, he gives priority to the phonetic similarity over the literal meaning of lyrics. Due to the lack of congruence between English and Chinese, Chinese listeners of Deng's version may not understand the original associations between Do and *lu* 鹿 [deer], Re and *yangguang* 阳光 [sunshine] in the lines.

As previously mentioned, the purpose of the English song is to teach children to memorise the seven solfège syllables. If the TT intends to achieve a similar pedagogical function, I think Xue's approach of highlighting the phonetic similarity works well. His version sounds more interesting and appealing and will be accepted relatively easily by Chinese children who are learning how to sing a song.

These examples have shown that for Xue, a rigid word-for-word translation of

lyrics alone is insufficient for translating a song, as it has to be matched with the music. Neither changing too much meaning of the song's lyrics is satisfactory. The next part will illustrate in detail other constraints identified by Xue when one attempts to integrate the Chinese lyrics with foreign music.

#### 4.4.3 Other Constraints in Integrating Translated Lyrics with Music

The preceding section mainly describes how Xue deals with the issue of meaning in song translation. It is evident that there are other factors a song translator has to take into consideration, which is the focus of the next section.

##### *4.4.3.1 Monosyllabic Words and Four Tones of the Chinese Language*

Hieble (1958: 236) suggests that the rhythm of the text must follow that of music. It is a well-known fact that Chinese is syllable-timed, whose rhythm usually resides in the rhyming of the lines and relates to the number of syllables. In other words, different English words have different syllable length and stress patterns, whereas in Chinese, each syllable takes roughly the same time and has equally strong stress. That is to say, one Chinese character usually corresponds to one musical note. Considering the differences between Chinese and other languages, Xue (2002: 107-125) puts forward the following suggestions for translating songs into Chinese:

- 1) The number of Chinese characters in the translated lyrics needs to be identical with that of the original lines;
- 2) The stressed or unstressed syllables shall be placed under the corresponding upbeat and accented notes;
- 3) The translated lyrics shall fit the original music phrasing and rests.

This implies that the translator may add some Chinese characters or phrases, repeat some lyrics or use reduplicative words to reach an equal number of syllables

and further go with the musical notes without increasing unnecessary information. Let me cite the English word ‘beautiful’ to briefly illustrate. ‘Beautiful’ has three syllables and usually corresponds with three musical notes, while its Chinese counterpart *mei* 美 contains only one syllable. To correspond with the original musical notes, the translator can choose other synonymous word pairs or phrases such as *meili* 美丽, *meijile* 美极了 or even *meibushengshou* 美不胜收 (each of the three equally means ‘beautiful’) depending on the actual timing patterns of the syllables, strong and weak beats.

Xue (2002: 136) further notes that Chinese language is not only monosyllabic but also tonal, whose four tones should also be kept in mind by the translator. If due attention is not paid, the tones can be a source of misunderstandings. This is because the pitch (the relative highness or lowness) of a phoneme sound in Chinese is a way of distinguishing the meaning of words. On the contrary, in non-tonal languages such as English, changes in pitch are used to emphasise importance or convey information about the emotion or mood state of the speaker, rather than the meaning of the word that is pronounced.

To specify, it is a well-known fact that there are four intonations in standard Mandarin Chinese, i.e. *yinping* 阴平 [the first/high-level tone] which means a steady high sound, *yangping* 阳平 [the second/high-rising tone] which refers to a sound that rises from mid-level to high, *shangsheng* 上声 [the third/falling-rising tone], a sound which has a slight descent followed by a rising pitch, and *qusheng* 去声 [the fourth/falling tone], which means a downward accent from high to low.<sup>49</sup> The pronunciation of a Chinese character is mainly decided by the combination of the initial consonant of the syllable, the vowel and the tone. That is to say, two Chinese characters sharing the same pronunciation may have two entirely different meanings based on its respective rising or descending intonation. For instance, the

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<sup>49</sup> For more information about the four tones of the Chinese language, please visit <http://www.chineselanguage.com/chinese-lessons/id/340/pronunciation--pinyin-4-tones.aspx> (last accessed 18 January 2016).

syllable ‘ma’ with the first tone and the third tone, i.e. ‘*mā*’ 妈 and ‘*mǎ*’ 马, can mean ‘mother’ and ‘horse’ respectively. Another two variations of ‘ma’ with the second and the third tone are *má* 麻 [linen] and *mà* 骂 [scold]. In this regard, the tones of words dictate the meaning and the difference in meaning can be attributed to the tone change.

Based on the information above, Chinese words themselves have their own particular intonation. When words are set to music in a song, the superimposed melodic structure gives the words another level of sound. That constitutes the reason why the four tones of the Chinese language have subtle implications for the interaction between the word tones and the musical melody. The composer has to be careful when setting the words to musical tones to ensure proper tone-melody mapping. To gain a better idea of the tone-tune relationship in Chinese songs, we can see the first line of the refrain of one popular Chinese song *Guxiang de yun* 故乡的云 [Clouds of Hometown] (1984).

$$\underline{5} \quad \underline{\dot{2}} \quad \underline{\dot{1}} \mid \underline{\dot{1}} - \underline{\dot{1}} \quad \underline{1} \quad \underline{\overset{\frown}{6} \overset{\frown}{5}} \mid \underline{5} \quad - -$$
 归 来 吧, 归 来 哟, [hey, come back, yo, come back]

Through the repetition of the phrase *guīlái* 归来 literally meaning ‘come back’, the song depicts the earnest homesickness of those people away from their hometown for a long time. According to Xue (2002: 138), the pitch of “*guilai*” is from high to low whereas the corresponding musical tone is from low to high. The inharmonious match between the lyrics and the tone results in an incorrect pronunciation of *guǐlái* 鬼来 meaning ‘the ghost is approaching’, which leads to a miscomprehension of the lyrics and confusion on the part of unfamiliar listeners. This constitutes the so-called ‘*daozi*’ 倒字 phenomenon in Chinese song composition, which means that the tones of Chinese characters go against the flow of the melody. It is the same for translating songs from other tongues into Chinese, where the translator needs to make sure that the translated lyrics’ lexical tones are

compatible with the melodic contour so as to enhance the understanding of the text. Thus, it is crucial to pay attention to the conformity between speech tone and melody (Xue 2002: 141).

According to Xue (2002: 144-145), any individual Chinese character does not necessarily cause misunderstanding unless set to musical notes along with other characters or phrases. He sums up some basic rules for choosing Chinese two-character phrases with appropriate tonal changes to fit the melody nicely and neatly in both song composition and translation as follows:

Table 4.4 A Summary of Pitch Inflection Patterns in Chinese

Pitch Inflection Patterns	Proper Two-Character Tone Collocations
<i>shangxing</i> 上行 [Upward, from a low note to a high note]	阳平-阴平
	阳平-去声
	上声- <i>pingsheng</i> 平声 [level tone] <sup>50</sup>
	上声-去声
	去声-阴平
<i>xiaxing</i> 下行 [Downward, from a high note to a low note]	阴平-阳平
	阴平-去声
	平声-上声
	去声-阳平
	去声-上声
	homonyms

<sup>50</sup> The level tone was one of the four tones in ancient Chinese, which has developed into the high level tone/ first tone and the rising tone/second tone in modern Chinese.

<p><i>tongyin jinxing</i> 同音进行 [The same notes repeated]</p>	<p>homonyms or characters with any of the four tones can be matched, but it is preferable to avoid placing the characters with the third tone in the end position.</p>
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Xue's conclusion illustrates that it is not easy to achieve a harmonious integration between the original melody and the corresponding Chinese lyrics. Music and language have different ways to present stresses. Therefore, the translator should identify the notes stressed by the composer and adjust target lyrics flexibly to fit the original stress patterns when translating English or other non-tonal language songs into Chinese. This is because all the accents shall fall in the right place. If we go back to the song *Nobody's Child*, we can see that the line 'no mommy's kisses and no daddy's smile' in the refrain has been changed into '*meiyou baba de fu'ai, meiyou mama de wen*' 没有爸爸的抚爱, 没有妈妈的吻 [no daddy's love and no Mommy's kisses]. Xue (2002: 61-62) states that such a rearrangement of the order is in the interest of rhythmic harmony, as the intonation of a word-for-word translation in Chinese would go against the flow of the melody.

To summarise Xue's idea discussed in this section, the song translator should be aware of the differences in stresses and syllables to avoid any mismatches between the musical notes and the Chinese lyrics, thereby reaching the rhythmic equivalence to the fullest.

#### 4.4.3.2 Rhyme

Lyrics are often said to resemble lines of a poem, especially in aspects of rhyme. Rhyme, the likeness of phonemes between syllables or words, is usually located at the end of lines in songs and poems, making them more fluent. Regarding the constraints of rhyming on the translator, Drinker (1950: 226) suggests that in translating any vocal work into English, rhymes shall be retained wherever the music



or the text dictates, while Low (2005) suggests a more flexible way of handling the rhyme in his pentathlon principle mentioned in Section 2.2.2, although it is desirable to maintain the same number and form of the original rhyme. According to Xue (2002: 85), there is no such song without rhyme and a song translator should be familiar with the rhyme and meters in poetry and songs to help with the song translation.

As previously discussed, unlike the English language which can be polysyllabic, Chinese characters are monosyllabic and consist of initial consonants, final vowels and a tone. Rhyme in Chinese refers to the same or similar final vowels. The universally accepted way to adopt rhyme in modern Chinese language is based on the classification of *shiba yun* 十八韵 [Eighteen Final Vowels]<sup>51</sup> stipulated in the book *Zengzhu zhonghua xinyun* 增注中华新韵 [Chinese New Rhymes with Augmented Commentary]<sup>52</sup> published by the Commercial Press in 1950, which can be summarised in Table 4.5 (as cited in Xue Fan 2002: 83-84):

Table 4.5 Eighteen Rhymes and Final Vowels in China

Names of Eighteen Rhymes	Final Vowels of Chinese Language in Pinyin <sup>53</sup>	Notes
First Ma (一麻)	-a	
Second Bo (二波)	-o	can be rhymed with -e as the same rhyme-scheme
Third Ge (三歌)	-e	
Fourth Jie (四皆)	-ie, -ue	

<sup>51</sup> This classification of rhymes, together with the Thirteen Opera Rhyme Schema (or *shisan zhe* 十三辙 in Chinese) commonly adopted in Peking Opera, is regarded as the standard rule for rhyming words in Chinese.

<sup>52</sup> It has to be pointed out that this is a secondary source, as I get to know the information in the Table 4.4 through reading Xue's book.

<sup>53</sup> The Pinyin schema is the official phonetic system for transcribing the sound of Chinese characters.

Fifth Zhi (五支)	-zhi, -chi, -shi, -ri, -zi, -ci, -si	can be rhymed with -i
Sixth Er (六儿)	-er	normally cannot be rhymed with others
Eleventh Yu (十一鱼)	-ü	common to be rhymed with -i
Seventh Qi (七齐)	-i	
Tenth Gu (十姑)	-u	
Ninth Kai (九开)	-ai, -uai	
Eighth Wei (八微)	-ei, -ui	
Thirteenth Hao (十三豪)	-ao, -iao	
Twelfth Hou (十二侯)	-ou, -iu	
Fourteenth Han (十四寒)	-an, -ian, -uan, -üan	
Fifteenth Hen (十五痕)	-en, -in, -un, -ün	can be rhymed with -eng, -ing, -ung
Sixteenth Tang (十六唐)	-ang, -iang, -uang	
Seventeenth Geng (十七庚)	-eng, -ing, -ung	
Eighteenth Dong (十八东)	-ong, -iong	can be rhymed with -eng, -ing, -ung

The above table shows us there is a great variety of rhyming patterns in Chinese, which needs to be taken into consideration in both Chinese lyrics writing and song translation. However, due to language differences, it is not easy to find words that deliver meaning and preserve rhyme when translating foreign songs into Chinese. According to Xue (2002: 87), Chinese song writers are inclined to adopt one type of rhyme throughout the song. Thus, Xue always adopts one rhyme-scheme for the

whole song, at least rhyming every other line. In particular, the even-numbered lines are always rhymed. It is common practice in Chinese songs to have the second, fourth and sixth lines rhymed while the first, third, and the fifth ones may not be necessarily rhymed.

It needs to be pointed out that such a principle is not held blindly in translating foreign songs into Chinese, as the rhyme scheme ‘aabccb’ is also very frequent in Chinese songs. Hence, the translator needs to carefully choose suitable rhymes in accordance with the musical pauses and rests (Xue *ibid.*: 89). Xue (*ibid.*: 94) further points out that the eighteen rhymes can be further divided into two categories depending on the broadness and fineness in terms of their phonetic features. For example, the broad rhymes such as ‘-a’, ‘-ao’, ‘-iao’, ‘-ang’, ‘-iang’ and ‘-uang’ are generally adopted to express enthusiasm and excitement as one has to open the mouth wider with a loud voice in pronouncing them. Whereas the narrow ones, those of ‘-i’, ‘-ei’, ‘-ui’ and ‘-u’, whose final vowels are pronounced with a narrower mouth opening, are more preferable in gentle and soothing songs.

Xue (*ibid.*: 106) rarely sacrifices the lyric meaning for the sake of the rhyming scheme. For him, in processing the rhyme, he always works backwards from the last line of each stanza to select corresponding pairs of rhymes. However, we should note the fact that generally modal words are rarely adopted as rhymes in Chinese, as rhymes are usually stressed and put under the emphasised notes.

#### 4.4.3.3 Music Genres and Cultural Differences

According to Xue (*ibid.*: 148), the music style of foreign songs cannot be ignored by the translator. This can be due to the reason that songs of different music styles such as religious hymns, blues, country music, Rock and Roll, folk and pop songs may differ in instrumentation, diction, tempo, beats, vocal styles and verse contour.

Xue (*ibid.*: 152-154) discusses his own experience of translating foreign songs

with different styles in his book. For example, when translating *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da* by Beatles (included in their 1968 album *The Beatles*), Xue noticed that the band had been famous for rock and roll music which usually features strong beats. But the song was gentle yet very upbeat and lively with plain and easily comprehensible lyrics. To incorporate this, Xue adopted simple lyrics to fit the original cadence. However, when it came to a Ukrainian song, which was set to the tune of a traditional folk song based on a poem written by Taras Hryhorovich Shevchenko, a great Ukrainian poet, Xue chose to make the lyrics resemble the poetry lines and reproduce the original poetic style.

Another interesting example is how Xue (2002: 151) translated the phrase meaning ‘my love’ in accordance with different music styles, as quite a large number of songs are based on the theme of love. If the foreign song falls into the category of folk songs or country music with rich flavour of the rural regions, Xue would translate the phrase ‘my love’ into *qinglang gege* 情郎哥哥 commonly used in Chinese folk songs (a kind of dialectic expression which literally means ‘my beloved brother’<sup>54</sup>). If the original foreign song is a modern pop song, then a bolder and straightforward counterpart meaning ‘my love’ in Chinese would be adopted, like *wode ai* 我的爱 [my love]. On the contrary, if it is a romantic love song to be translated into Chinese, Xue seems more inclined to translate it in a more implicit way, like the phrase *wode xinshangren* 我的心上人 [the person in my heart].

Besides the awareness of different genres of music, Xue is concerned with the constraints of cultural differences put on the song translator. According to him (2002: 156), due to different cultural backgrounds, there can be a lexical gap with a vocabulary mismatch in the TL. Some words and phrases can carry some connotations specific to a certain culture, or may be described as positive in a culture but become negative in another. To illustrate this point, orchids symbolise beauty, nobility and refinement in Chinese culture. Chinese people view the appearance and

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<sup>54</sup> The word ‘brother’ here does not signify biological relationship in its conventional sense, as in a couple of lovers, the girl always calls the boy ‘brother’ to show intimacy.

the singing sounds of a magpie as a sign of happiness and good luck. Similar word associations are widely known among Chinese people but may not be familiar to people outside China.

In the book, Xue (ibid.: 156-159) shares with the readers how he translated the word ‘clown’ in the line ‘A flibbertijibbet! A will-o’-the wisp! A clown!’ of the song *Maria* (1959) from the musical *The Sound of Music*. According to him, in European countries, clowns always play an essential role by acting fool in the circus performance and bring to the audience much amusement and laughter. Thus, their performances are well received among the people. In the musical, the nuns call Maria a clown but actually they have no negative intention. This is simply because Maria is too frivolous to be accustomed to the austere life in the Abbey. Rather than an insult, the word ‘clown’ here is associated with a joking and funny person. However, the word *xiaochou* 小丑 (the literal translation of ‘clown’) is only neutral if used to refer to the performer in the circus or traditional Chinese opera. If a person is directly called *xiaochou* in daily life in China, it is normally taken as an unpleasant insult. Calling Maria a clown may not be easily accepted by Chinese audiences, as they are unwilling to associate the lovely Maria with a foolish person. As how to translate ‘clown’ affects the choice of rhyme for the whole song, Xue admitted that he had been pondering upon the translation of this single word for several months until hearing the word *huobao* 活宝 in a talk-show programme. The word *huobao* literally means ‘a funny clown’ but with no negative implications. This, in Xue’s mind, could convey the original contextual information and accord with the local Chinese culture. Without hesitation, he chose *huobao* and based on the rhyme pattern ‘-ao’, finished translating the remaining lyrics.

Moreover, regarding that plenty of songs are themed on love, Xue (2002: 166-168) states that Chinese people are quite conservative and shy in expressing love whereas Western people are more open and explicit in talking about love or sex. Particularly before the 1980s, Chinese culture would avoid explicit expressions about

the topic. Consequently, he normally chose not to introduce those foreign songs if their lyrics were deemed as erotic or detrimental to public morals. Or he erased those ‘inappropriate’ words which contained strong sexual references. For instance, Xue (2002: 168-169) discusses how he translated two lines “Over and over, I will whisper you name; Over and over, I will kiss you again” in the English song *Over and Over* (1969) by Nana Mouskouri. According to Xue, when he translated this song, it was in the end of 1970s, shortly after the Cultural Revolution was over. In order to render his translation more acceptable and suitable with the ideology at that time, Xue translated ‘I will kiss you again’ into ‘*wo qinqie sinian*’ 我亲切思念, which means ‘I sincerely miss you’.

Undisputedly, there are many other culture-bound problems. The translator needs to be aware of the cultural differences and effectively address them so as to better convey the original cultural images of foreign songs.

#### 4.4.4 Summary

As has been shown above, semantic fidelity of the lyrics is complicated by various factors in the process of translation, such as singability, music styles and cultural differences. Much of the difficulty lies in matching the translated lyrics with the music. To achieve the singability, the translator is restricted by the length of each bar and the number of syllables, the alternation of strong and weak beats, rhyme and meaning. Citing Xue’s words (2002: 5), song translation is demanding, as it requires a good mastery of translation skills, literary attainments and musical sensibility.

### **4.5 A Bourdieusian Perspective on Xue’s Song Translation Practice**

Having exemplified the way Xue addresses different constraints and translates songs in the previous section, I will shift my focus to contextualise Xue’s translation activities within the corresponding socio-cultural milieu following Bourdieu’s

sociological perspective.

#### 4.5.1 Agents in the Field of Song Translation

As discussed in Section 2.5.1.1, a field is, in essence, “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 97). A field refers to an arena where different agents and institutions cooperate with or compete against each other. In a similar vein, Pym (1998: ix) suggests that “only through translators and their social entourage (clients, patrons, readers) can we try to understand why translations were produced in a particular historical time and space”. As a song translator, Xue does not behave in isolation. Rather, he interacts with many other agents in the field. Hence, it is of significance to know who are involved in the field and examine who or which institutions can affect Xue’s decision-making. The following part will look at the interplay of different agents involved in the selection, editing and dissemination of Xue’s translated songs.

As noted by Wu (2015) in a *Xinmin wanbao* report,<sup>55</sup> among Xue’s 2000 translated songs, songs from the Soviet Union and Russia not only occupy 40 percent of his oeuvre, but have also received much more attention than songs translated from other languages. For example, it has been proven that throughout the world, there are more people singing *Podmoskovnye Vechera* in Chinese than in Russian (Wu *ibid.*). It is natural to ask why the impact and the dissemination of Xue’s translated songs are, to some degree, uneven and selective. According to Xue (1988), over half of his translated works were produced and published in the 1950s. In trying to understand the important role of Russian songs in Xue’s career, we may need to understand the agents and factors in play during this historical period.

On the second day after the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, the Soviet Union established formal diplomatic relations with China, becoming the

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<sup>55</sup> The news report on 3 May 2015 is available at <http://news.163.com/15/0503/14/AOMS7CK700014AED.html> (last accessed 16 January 2016).

first country to do so in the world. Since then, the Sino-Soviet relations flourished with China having a close alliance with the Soviet Union. In the meantime, Western countries represented by the United States imposed strict sanctions and blockades on China, which hindered people from knowing more about the Western countries and accessing their cultural products.<sup>56</sup> As China was heavily modelled on the Soviet-Union system for development at that time, the government propaganda departments largely controlled the cultural production. The song translation activities thus served for political aims and agendas of the CPC, as the songs chosen for translation were decided by the government. Moreover, the two countries signed *Sino-Soviet Culture Exchange Agreement* in 1956, which greatly enhanced the mutual cooperation (Xue 2002: 187-190). Against this backdrop, many Soviet films were introduced and shown to Chinese people, and some of their theme songs came to be well received. The music records and complementary scores from the Soviet Union could also be easily and cheaply obtained in bookstores. This considerably facilitated the translation of Soviet songs. Another notable phenomenon is that in the mid-1950s, a large number of students studied in the Soviet Union, who played an important role in introducing Russian songs to China later on (Mittler 1997: 76).

During the same period, translated songs also enjoyed various means of dissemination and could easily reach the audience. In 1952, the journal *Gequ* 歌曲 [songs] was launched in Beijing, which dedicated itself to introducing songs from all over the world. Xue was sometimes commissioned by the former Shanghai Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra to translate songs. As mentioned earlier, he published his first translation in the magazine *Guangbo gexuan* in 1953. According to Xue (2009),<sup>57</sup> *Guangbo gexuan*, launched by Shanghai People's Broadcasting

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<sup>56</sup> Information about the diplomatic relations at this particular point of time abounds on news reports. See <http://news.163.com/special/00013D42/1960zsje.html>, [http://www.mzdyjw.com/show\\_content.php?id=612](http://www.mzdyjw.com/show_content.php?id=612) and <http://baike.baidu.com/view/662018.htm> for more details (last accessed 28 August 2015).

<sup>57</sup> This is a speech given by Xue on the International Symposium on Sino-Russian Music Exchange in Harbin, China on 21 September 2009 [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=229](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=229) (last accessed 3



Station, was enthusiastic to organise a team of translators and musicians to introduce foreign songs. These songs would be included in each issue first and later on taught in radio programmes. Xue (2002: 204) states that in 1954, the first state-owned music press, which has become today's *Renmin yinyue chubanshe* 人民音乐出版社 [People's Music Publishing House], initiated many song translation projects as well. The publication of Xue's translated songs owed much to the active support from these publishers and organisations. Besides the traditional means of spreading the translated works such as books, journals and radio broadcasts, the dissemination of the translated Soviet songs in China also benefited from the cultural exchanges between the two countries by means of various performances featuring Soviet songs given by artistic troupes from the Soviet Union.

Xue (1998) puts that the period spanning from the year 1949 to 1961 as the golden period when a large number of Soviet songs got introduced into China. From what has been said above, ideology assumed an important role in selecting Soviet songs for translation at that time, with the Party, relevant government propaganda departments and the publishers acting as patrons and providing substantial support to China's song translation activities at large.

Except for deciding which kind of songs conform to the mainstream ideology at a certain period, the Party and relevant government propaganda departments rarely intervened in Xue's concrete translation strategies. If Xue came across editorial negotiations, it was usually with the publishers or editors. Xue (2002: 15-17) cites the example of *Mosike jiaowai de wanshang* when he had to negotiate with editors of *Guangbo gexuan* in 1957. None of the editors knew Russian but altered some parts of Xue's translation and published on magazine without any discussion with Xue. Xue expressed that it was natural for editors to modify the draft but the modification should have been better than the original draft. However, the Russian lines which depicted the tranquillity of the evening were changed into singing scenes, which

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July 2013).

spoiled the original peace. It was only after several rounds of modification that Xue got a chance to republish a satisfactory version.

The Sino-Soviet relationship worsened<sup>58</sup> in the 1960s, which exerted great negative influence upon the dissemination of songs from the Soviet Union. According to Xue (2002: 207), during the same period, China's relations with other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America witnessed great improvement. Correspondingly, songs from those countries themed on national independence movements were translated into Chinese. This, to a large extent, could account for the shift that Xue published collections of his translated songs such as *Lading meizhou gequ ji* in 1958 and *Fandi zhi ge* 反帝之歌 [Songs on Anti-Imperialism] in 1960. The ten-year Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966 nearly put all cultural activities to an end, and song translation was no exception.

Based on what has been presented so far, Xue's selection of songs to be translated can be explained using Lefevere's notion of patronage, which refers to "the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature". It is further divided into three components, namely the ideological, economic and status constraints. If the three components all stem from the same source, this type is called undifferentiated patronage; otherwise it is differentiated (1992: 16-17). From this perspective, Xue's translation activities in 1950s and 60s was under "undifferentiated patronage" as the Communist Party and its government acted as the only patron for all spheres of activities.

In the late 1980s, thanks to the more favourable diplomatic relations with different countries, Chinese people had more opportunities to access different cultural products. One notable example is that numerous shops would play foreign pop songs as the background music. However, in contrast to the increasing number of foreign songs in China, China's song translation activities declined substantially

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<sup>58</sup> More information about the changing diplomatic relations between China and Soviet Union is available at <http://countrystudies.us/china/128.htm> and <http://www.ibiblio.org/chinesehistory/contents/03pol/c05s04.html> (last accessed 20 August 2015).

since then. According to Xue, this is due to many unfavourable changes.<sup>59</sup>

Firstly, most journals and magazines which published song translations in the past stopped their publication or shifted their business focus. As a consequence; translators could not find a publisher to publish their translated songs. Secondly, book stores rarely imported and introduced books on foreign songs. Given the copyright constraints, translators had to purchase music scores on their own, which limited their ST selection. Thirdly, the press was no longer enthusiastic to publish books of translated songs considering their limited profit-making potential. Finally, relevant government departments or organisations did not engage in organising and administrating song translation activities any longer.

Moreover, changes in expectations and tastes on the parts of listeners should not be overlooked. Thanks to the advances in technology in the era of globalisation, it is much easier for Chinese people to listen to foreign songs now. English pop songs dominate today's foreign song scene in China, where the largest group of recipients are the younger generation with a better mastery of foreign languages. Many of them prefer the original versions (as more relevant information from the music fans' comments can be found in Chapters 5 and 7), or most of the time, non-singable translations of the lyrics are sufficient for them. The top-down mode for the distribution and reception of translated songs in the past has gradually given way to a more participatory platform where the music fans voluntarily translate the meaning of lyrics and freely share with other peers.

Although it has become more difficult for Xue to obtain licenses of songs for use and publish new translations since the late 1980s, he has never stopped

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<sup>59</sup> The information is based on a speech given by Xue Fan in the Forum *Gaige kaifang sanshinian yu wenxue fanyi fazhan* 改革开放三十年与文学翻译发展 [China's Thirty Years of Reform and Opening Up and Its Literary Translation] held by Shanghai Translators Association, on 19 November 2008. [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=228](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=228) (last accessed on 7 July 2013).

translating songs. In 2011, with the help of his friends, the editor of the journal *Fengkuang e'yu* 疯狂俄语 [Crazy Russian] Mr. Liao Sha 廖莎 and the manager of Beijing Kiev Restaurant Mr. Du Changjian 杜昌建, Xue was able to build his personal website with the sponsorship of *Xinshidai wenhua jiaoliu zhongxin* 新时代文化交流中心 [Shanghai New Era Cultural Exchange Centre].<sup>60</sup> Xue nowadays uses the website to share his views on song translation and publish his newly translated songs.

Having a good personal relationship with several Russian composers also encouraged Xue's song translation, since sometimes he had support from the original song composers or other agents in the source culture. For example, Xue (1989) indicated that as the first Chinese translating the music works of Alexandra Pakhmutova, one of the best known composers in Soviet and later Russian popular music, he established correspondence with her in 1988. The composer always mailed Xue music scores, records and some unpublished manuscripts. This provided Xue with more background information about her compositions and helped him translate her songs.

In addition, the deepening relationship between China and Russia boosted the continuing spread of Xue's existing translated Russian songs. As reported by Zi (1999), the year of 1999 marked the 50th anniversary since China and Russia established diplomatic ties and of the founding of the Sino-Russian Friendship Association (SRFA), which witnessed a series of commemorative events. On 7 October of the same year, a concert featuring Russian songs themed on 'Long Live the Friendship' was staged in the auditorium of the National Library of China. The non-profit concert was initiated, and organised by Xue with a group of Russian song lovers and eight folk choirs participating in the performance. Similar concerts consisting of Xue's translated works were held in many other cities such as Chengdu,

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<sup>60</sup> It is an institution dedicated to promoting Russian culture and the Sino-Russian exchanges in China. Such information is available at <http://www.xuefan.net/> (last accessed 18 January 2016).

Zhongshan, and Hangzhou.<sup>61</sup>

As has been shown above, it can be argued that Xue's song translation practice is subjected to constant external social changes, particularly closely related to patronage, with various agents participating in the field of song translation. As the agents in the field of China's song translation activities are endowed with various expectations and dispositions in different times, their patronage has manifested itself in various ways. Before China opened itself to the outside world in late 1980s, due to ideological control,<sup>62</sup> the government served as an important patron of song translation activities together with other propaganda agencies such as the bookstores, publishing houses and radio programmes playing an equally essential role in promoting Xue's practice of introducing foreign songs into China. However, as the primary function of songs is no longer propaganda, song translation activities enjoy relatively more autonomy from the political field; they are nevertheless more subjected to market demands. As the previous support from government departments and publishers has been discontinued, Xue's current translation practice is more self-initiated or supported by his music fans and friends considering his social status. In other words, there is no direct link between economic or ideological components and social status in terms of the patronage he currently receives.

To conclude, the external social changes have exerted substantial influence on Xue's song translation activities, with the political party, various institutions, publishers, original song composers and audiences playing different roles over the time.

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<sup>61</sup> All related media reports can be retrieved on Xue's personal website <http://www.xuefan.net/hdbd.asp> (last accessed 6 July 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Xue's cautious stance in translating some foreign lyrics which might be deemed improper by the general public at that time, as a way of practicing self-censorship, evidences the influences of ideology on him.

#### 4.5.2 Habitus of Xue as a Song Translator

Field and habitus are intertwined and mutually constitutive. Bourdieu (1998: 81) states

Habitus is a socialised body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world---a field---and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world.

This indicates that a person's embodied perceptions, decisions and actions are conditioned by the social structures of the field but can also exert influences and cause changes in the external social world. Relevant agents and their role in influencing Xue's song translation activities have been identified previously. In this section, I will analyse Xue's habitus and explore its interconnectedness with his translation behaviour.

As noted by Bourdieu,

The habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences...; the habitus transformed by the action of the school, itself diversified, is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences... and so on, from restructuring to restructuring. (as cited in Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 134)

In other words, habitus is a product of one's early experience but at the same time subject to changes caused by subsequent experiences. When asked about the underlying motive behind pursuing song translation as a lifelong career, Xue (2002: 226) recalled that he was forced to learn to play the piano by his parents in childhood. This was a reluctant experience but laid a good foundation for his subsequent work in song translation with improved music appreciation and

knowledge. After entering senior middle school, Xue found himself fascinated by music, especially revolutionary songs, Chinese folk songs and songs from the Soviet Union. Xue's love of music prompted him to study relevant subjects such as composition and the analysis of musical forms, etc.

As mentioned previously, Xue's application was refused by the university. Again, it was music which helped him through times of disappointment. According to Meng (2006), one of Xue's favourite musical works was Beethoven's 5th Symphony, which epitomises tenacious struggles against fate. In Xue's own words, "I am not that heroic and bold as Beethoven to say that 'I will grab fate by the throat', but I will try not to let fate take my throat". That was the reason why Xue did not lose hope and started to study by himself. Influenced by his mother, Xue developed a deep interest in literature as a child. Xue (2002: 227) notes that he had read numerous books and poems translated by Chinese literary translators and thought some of their translation skills could be applied to song translation. Through comparing the translated literary works with their originals, Xue tried to analyse and imitate the strategies and techniques used by those translators. As it happened, Xue was learning Russian through radio programmes, and he began to experiment with translating some Russian poems, essays and songs.

It is necessary to mention again those translators briefly discussed in Section 4.4.1. As those theories played an important role in the bigger field of literary translation in China's modern history, it was inevitable for Xue to be influenced by them when he started translating songs. In turn, Xue's translational habitus plays a role in constructing and reproducing the field of song translation. To Xue, song translation is not simply a matter of semantic transfer of the original lyrics as singability is of primary importance. However, it is not about totally discarding the sense of the lyrics for the purpose of singability, either. This perspective determines how Xue sets the boundary of the song translation field.

Few people have engaged in song translation for such a long period of time as

Xue. This, however, does not mean that song translation is easy for Xue. In his correspondence with Li (1996), Xue revealed the difficulties he came across in translating film songs from countries other than the Soviet Union as only the music scores of Soviet songs were relatively easily available. During that time, Xue had no choice but to go to the cinema to note down and check the music scores on the spot. Noting down the music scores was highly time-consuming and energy-demanding, which was far out of proportion to the corresponding payment. However, Xue tended to accept the low payment of song translation because of his belief in the value of song translation. According to Bourdieu, lacking a feel for the game prevents a person from entering the field. Xue (2002: 4) states that song translation is important and necessary as it greatly prolongs the artistic life of the foreign songs beyond their origins and helps the target audiences appreciate the songs. Viewed from this perspective, Xue's love of music and song translation has acted as an important incentive for him to devote himself to song translation for his whole life.

Xue is specialised and prolific in translating Russian songs, which results not only from the extratextual influences and strict censorship on text selection, but also his fascination with Russian songs and culture.<sup>63</sup> In an interview with Li and Zhang (2006), Xue stated that Russian songs were better than American ones. Comparatively speaking, a vast majority of American songs were themed on love but rarely on 'motherland' or 'ideals', with words like 'love' and 'kiss' highly common in English lyrics. In comparison, he felt Russian songs were more encouraging and enthusiastic, as most of them extol people's positive outlook on life, deep concern over the country's development, dedication to great cause, national duty, etc. This may also be indispensable to Xue's personality. Xue (1988) reveals that because of his disability, he was inclined to hero worship and idealism, finding those stories of faith, revolution and heroism inspiring. Examples include Yue Fei 岳飞, a patriot

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<sup>63</sup> Xue explicitly writes about his love of Russian songs, available at [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=204](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=204) and [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=213](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=213) (last accessed 27 June 2013).



and national hero in ancient China, and the protagonist Arthur Burton in the novel *The Gadfly* (1897). Similarly, the progressive life and burning passion reflected in the songs from the Soviet Union had a strong emotional resonance on him. Here, habitus extends to Xue's embodied taste for particular kinds of music, which is related to his life experiences, and in turn shapes his ongoing translation of Russian songs in accord with his interests.

As Swartz (2002: 63s) suggests, "an individual's habitus is an active residue of his or her past that functions within the present to shape his or her perceptions, thought, and bodily comportment". Habitus in Bourdieu's sense is therefore a dynamic concept. It has to be noted that Xue did not intend to take song translation as his only job initially, as he hoped to work as a literary critic one day. Unfortunately, his dream of working in the field of literature was broken by the ten-year Culture Revolution and in order to make ends meet, Xue picked up song translation as his career in the late 1970s, as he had already successfully translated several songs and earned a certain fame at that time (Xue 2002: 227-229). How Xue responds to the current lukewarm reception of Russian songs in China provides another good example of habitus as an evolving construct. According to Li (2006), Xue is mainly translating English songs into Chinese now as the old generation of listeners are not used to the new Russian songs and younger generation of Chinese people are more fervent on American and European pop songs. Given the difficulty in distribution and the contracting market of translated Russian songs, Xue lays more emphasis on English ones. He has even established virtual chatting groups on some websites to attract more young people and know more about their interest. All these facts have proved that Xue's habitus is constantly shaped by social conditioning.

To conclude, Xue's translational habitus is acquired through various sources, which has developed and changed with family upbringing, education and other life experiences. Xue's achievement in China's song translation is indispensable to his unique life experience, outlook on value and his pursuits of language, literature and

music.

#### 4.5.3 Positions and Power Relations in the Field

The following part aims to untangle relations between Xue and other agents such as commissioners, publishers, and institutions in the field of song translation.

Any individual's position in the field is influenced by the types and amounts of capital he/she obtains. Like any other field, the unequal distribution of capital, along with the internal hierarchy, is a key feature of the field in the context of China's song translation activities. Through accumulating and deploying their capital, different agents are constantly improving or safeguarding their positions, which constitutes the dynamics of the field. Hence, one of the primary aims of this section is to examine Xue's changing position and the various power relationships in the field of China's song translation.

Bourdieu's 'capital' goes beyond the economic capital in the traditional sense, which also includes cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1997). Any field exerts certain requirement for entry. The previous discussion of Xue's song translation practice shows us what skills or knowledge people should have if they seek to enter the field of song translation. A good mastery of foreign languages, music and literature is an essential type of cultural capital in Bourdieu's sense specific to song translation. Xue's deep interest in music and literature, along with his taste in Russian songs, can be deemed as one kind of cultural capital, which has consolidated his belief in the significance of song translation. Though without formal higher education, Xue has achieved good musical sensitivity, literary attainments and translation skills through hard work and self-learning.

As shown previously, Xue has been a member of many professional organisations and affiliated with certain social networks. For instance, in 1990, the former Union of Composers of the Soviet Union wrote a letter specially to express

appreciation of Xue's contribution to promoting Soviet songs in China.<sup>64</sup> According to Jiang (1999), on 29 January 1999, concerts of Xue's translated songs were held in Beijing Theatre for three consecutive days, which is said to be held exclusively for a translator for the first time in history. The concerts were sponsored by China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, CMA and TAC, Music Weekly Press and Beijing Theatre. The SRFA wrote Xue a birthday letter in 2009.<sup>65</sup> All these symbolise Xue's connection with various organisations and the subsequent high level of social capital. In addition, Xue's personal contacts with Russian composers and government officers, such as the famous composer Vasily Pavlovich Solovyov-Sedoi and G. Kulikova, First Deputy Chairman of the SRFA, function as another source of his social capital.

Economic capital is usually associated with monetary income and financial resources. Inside the song translation field, translators' economic capital can be earned via the circulation of their published translated works and the contribution fees. It is commonly argued that song translators have scarce financial assets given the low payment they receive. A typical example is the translator of *Ayo Mama*, an Indonesian folk song, Lin Caibin 林蔡冰. He has published over 300 translations of foreign songs and three collections of translated works, but could not make ends meet. He has no choice but to repair locks for others in order to make a living.<sup>66</sup> Xue is no exception, although he is endowed with relatively high volumes of cultural and social capital.

Xue (2002: 217) mentions that his books' sales are fairly low and poor. Xinhua Bookstore, China's largest bookstore chain, is unwilling to introduce and sell the books, assuming that people have little interest in buying them. Hence, it is not easy for Xue's books to reach customers, which has prevented him from earning enough

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<sup>64</sup> The letter is available at [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=296](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=296) (last accessed 8 July 2013).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> The news is available at <http://ent.sina.com.cn/2004-09-05/0245494641.html> (last accessed 9 July 2013).

income from publishing. Throughout his whole life, Xue could not accumulate much money or assets which could be turned into money. As shown in a TV interview on Tianjin TV Channel in 2006,<sup>67</sup> Xue's outstanding achievement in song translation stands in stark contrast to his relatively poor life. Xue works on a freelance basis and consequently has no fixed income. For each song he translates, he only gets RMB60 (nearly £6) as remuneration. From this standpoint, Xue ranks quite low in terms of economic capital and can barely make ends meet from translating songs.

All the cultural, economic and social capital can be converted to symbolic capital, which has been defined as “degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)” (Bourdieu 1993: 7). Various awards contribute to Xue's accumulation of symbolic capital. According to Zhao (2010), Xue gets much exposure to the public through different newspaper reports and TV programmes, such as ‘An Exclusive Interview with Xue Fan’ on the CCTV Programme *Oriental Horizon* in 1994, a documentary named *Xuefan de ge* 薛范的歌 [Songs of Xue Fan] made by Shanghai Television Channel in 1995, and a talk show on Xue Fan and Soviet Songs broadcast by Chongqing Television Channel in 1999.<sup>68</sup> This indicates that Xue enjoys good social recognition and fame, which further constitutes his symbolic capital in the field.

In the interview on Tianjin TV Channel in 2006,<sup>69</sup> Xue himself mentioned that

Translators usually work behind the scenes and not so many translators can be so lucky as me to be brought to the front stage and communicate directly with the recipients of my works. I feel happy to see that my translations are accepted and loved by listeners, as I am only a translator and the songs are not my original compositions.

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<sup>67</sup> [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=315](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=315) (last accessed on 9 July 2015).

<sup>68</sup> Relevant information is also available at <http://xuefan.net/dsj.htm> (last accessed 29 January 2016).

<sup>69</sup> The interview can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIKUq9yYZ7s> or [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=315](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=315) (last accessed 29 August 2015).

It is true that Xue is neither a composer having his own original works nor a singer, yet paradoxically he has a loyal following with many people and organisations voluntarily holding concerts of his translated songs for him, as mentioned earlier. When talking about the influential song *Mosike jiaowai de wanshang*, Xue states that “in a sense, I am not only a person called Xue Fan; I have become a symbol of people’s love towards Russian songs and culture”. A further indication of Xue’s recognised position and his high amount of symbolic capital in the field of China’s song translation is that some of the songs were actually translated by others of Xue’s generation. However, people often mistake them for Xue’s translations.

Like habitus, capital is not a static concept. Different forms of capital can be convertible to each other, although they differ in liquidity and convertibility. Regarding the interconvertibility between different types of capital, Anheie et al (1995) posit that economic capital is the most liquid and thus can be converted to social and cultural capital easily. By comparison, converting social capital into economic or cultural capital would entail greater difficulty since social capital is less liquid. On the whole, Xue is culturally-symbolically rich but economically weak. His accumulated social and symbolic capital, nevertheless, has opened up new income opportunities for him to some extent. It is reported by Meng (2006) that Xue’s life saw some improvement after he received the award from President Yeltsin in 1997 for his contribution to promoting Sino-Russian relations. Thanks to a Letter of appeal jointly written by several academicians in Nanjing, Shanghai Municipal Government decided to grant Xue a monthly subsidy of RMB 1000 (around £100).

According to Bourdieu (1993: 73), once the agents achieve recognition and occupy a dominant position in the field, they can impose their ideas such as what is acceptable within the field on new-comers to the field. Because of his prolific work and fame in song translation, Xue’s idea of song translation and strategies of translating songs into Chinese have exerted much influence within the entire field.

For instance, in an interview with Liao (2007), when asked about the prevalent phenomenon that many Chinese songs set individual words to foreign melodies which bear little or no relationship with the original lyrics, Xue emphasises that the so-called Chinese versions of the foreign songs through word setting are not translations (as cited in Liao 2009). This illustrates Xue's act of maintaining the boundary of the song translation field.

However, it has to be admitted that China's song translation activities have declined, which has been previously discussed. Translators thus lack capital and resources to circulate their works widely. Against this backdrop, Xue is constantly making efforts to defend his position and maintain the operational mechanism of song translation field.

As reported by Gong (1992), Xue once appealed to the newspaper *Xinmin wanbao* that his intellectual property rights needed to be protected as his translated works had been used by many publishers without payment or remuneration. In his letter to the Press, Xue underscored

The song *Mosike jiaowai de wanshang* and some of my other translations have been recorded into cassette tapes or used in Karaoke videos. However, only Shanghai Audio Visual Company has paid me royalties so far. Sometimes, I wrote to the publishers for payment but only to find my requests completely ignored.

It is no different with book publishers. Xue cited the case of the book *Aiqing shi lansede* 爱情是蓝色的 [Love is Blue], a collection of 101 world pop songs published by Liaoning Education Press in February of 1989. According to Xue, the book included 20 translated songs by him, but his name was erased and changed to names of some others, which was complete plagiarism (Gong 1992).

Xue revealed on his website that he wanted to edit and launch a series of albums,

which would consist of translations of artistic, pop, film and folk songs from different countries. The songs would be chosen for their beautiful melody and easy comprehensibility and more efforts would be put to include those well-known and influential songs but rarely introduced into China before. The songs in the albums would all be sung in Chinese, which can let listeners learn the songs easily and further help spread them. Moreover, Xue expressed his wish that some audio and video publishers and retailers could invest in recording and releasing related albums in spite of possible low sales and marginal profits. Xue even left his own contact information for whoever was interested in supporting his plan.<sup>70</sup>

All these efforts signify Xue's desire to get more support for song translation activities as well as his struggles to defend and improve his position in the field.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter starts with a brief introduction of Xue Fan, one of China's most distinguished song translators and highly prolific in translating Russian songs. It then presents a detailed analysis of Xue's song translation practice. To Xue, song translation is never a mere textual transfer of the lyrics given the songs' artistic nature and auditory perception. Xue's principle of 'capturing the overall meaning and creating new words' and relevant strategies for translating songs have shown us that to preserve the semantic meaning of the original lyrics while seeking the singability in Chinese is difficult due to various constraints such as rhyme, rhythm, music styles and cultural differences.

China's song translation activities on the whole have been conditioned by the changing broader social settings. As a song translator, Xue is not only constrained by the inherent difficulties of translating the song texts, but also subjected to external

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<sup>70</sup> Information is available at [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=205](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=205) (last accessed 9 July 2013).

changes. Previous research is mainly focused on Xue's concrete translation strategies, and rarely investigates into how the external social changes have influenced his translation activities. Thus, the chapter took a Bourdieusian approach and elaborated on core notions of Bourdieu and their relevance for Xue's song translation practice.

It is found that Xue has been under the influences of various patronage. For instance, Xue's selection of songs to be translated in the past was largely subjected to ideology, due to China's fluctuating diplomatic relations with Soviet-Union. Instead of the past vigorous support, today's market-driven publishers are less interested in editing and publishing Xue's translated songs considering the limited readership. A subsequent analysis of Xue's habitus, which embodies his individual disposition towards song translation and the influences from the family upbringing, education and other social groups, helps to account for his continued adherence to song translation. The chapter ends with using Bourdieu's notion of capital to examine Xue's position and unravel the power relations in the field of song translation. As a competent and renowned song translator, Xue ranks high in terms of cultural, social and symbolic capital, but low in economic capital.

To summarise, this chapter has yielded insights into how Xue develops his view of song translation and adjusts his translational behaviour to the changes in the social environment where his song translation activities are embedded.



## Chapter 5 Online Amateur Translation of Foreign Songs in China

### 5.1 Introduction

As already mentioned in Section 3.3.2, the abundance of user-generated content (UGC) in Web 2.0 era has fuelled the development of various web-based communities such as photo and video sharing sites, social-networking sites, Wikis and blogs all over the world (Dong et al 2014; Hjorth 2011; Gardner 2008). Gradually, the dichotomy between producers of content and consumers of content has been breaking down. In other words, more and more people have moved from being consumers to the so-called ‘prosumers’ (Toffler 1980) in virtual communities. This equally applies to translation, which has undergone great changes in the new digital landscape. As stated by O’Hagan, “the boundary between the professional translator and the amateur is no longer clear” (2009: 115). Similarly, Perrino uses the term ‘user-generated translation (UGT)’ to refer to “the harnessing of Web 2.0 services and tools to make online content – be it written, audio or video – accessible in a variety of languages” (2009: 8). Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of fans subtitling MVs and anonymous individuals making literal translations of foreign lyrics available online has emerged in recent years.

As hinted earlier, the participation of amateurs in translating and distributing foreign songs has become equally common in China, whose Internet population has grown rapidly. Hence, this chapter focuses on the amateur engagement in song translation activities in present-day China. The first part reviews relevant literature on amateur translation with a particular focus on its implications for the issue under consideration and identify the existing gap; it then proceeds to investigate in depth different virtual communities involved in translating songs to Chinese.

Particular emphasis is placed on a team named ‘LC & LD’ subtitling MVs. In doing so, this chapter seeks to address the following questions: what drives amateurs to engage in song translation in the first place? How does the practice of translating

foreign songs take different forms in different online settings? Why do fans prefer a certain website or community over others? What implications do these observed new patterns in China's song translation activities offer to us? For my purposes, therefore, the last part draws on Bourdieu's conceptual framework to analyse amateur translation in relation to music.

## **5.2 Review of Existing Research on Amateur Translation**

Non-professional translation is growing in terms of both quantity and quality across the world, thanks to the technological advances and digitisation. Compared with conventional translations done by the professionals, the practice of amateur translation has attracted less scholarly interest. A clarification of relevant terminology has to be made in the first place for the present research, given that many different terms have been adopted to describe the phenomenon (Dolmaya 2012; Perrino 2009). For example, Pym (2011) briefly touches upon the respective advantages and drawbacks of alternative terms such as 'UGT', 'crowdsourcing', 'collaborative translation', 'community translation', or the CT3 (abbreviation for 'community, crowdsourced and collaborative translation'), 'participative translation' 'non-professional translation'. Pym (2011) further states his preference for the term 'voluntary translation' to highlight the voluntary dimension of the whole process.

Cronin (2010) uses 'crowd-sourced' or 'wiki-translation' to refer to the user-driven translation practice informed by Web 2.0. Basically these different terms all involve voluntary participation, either by amateurs or by professional translators, and hence are overlapping to some extent. It is not the purpose of this study to distinguish these terms from each other here. Instead, as the subject in focus is song translation, in order to better capture the interrelatedness of TS and music study, a discipline where we can find many discussions about amateur music-making and music fans, 'amateur translation' or 'non-professional translation' will be used interchangeably with 'fan translation' in what follows.

A key publication on amateur translation is the special issue *The Translator, Non-professionals Translating and Interpreting: Participatory and Engaged Perspectives*, where Susam-Saraeva and Pérez-González (2012) have collected a number of articles focusing on this specific issue. In their introductory article, Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva (2012) provide a comprehensive list of extant literature on non-professional translation activities of a great variety, which covers news, religious services, crisis and disaster management, movements over the blogosphere, and crowdsourcing translation projects of organisations or institutions. Such research is an indicator of growing scholarly interest in translation and interpreting activities beyond the professional sphere.

Scholars have investigated motivations behind non-professional translation (Kayahara 2005; Dolmaya 2012; Izwaini 2014; Olohan 2012), the production conditions and working process (Hatcher 2005; Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz 2006, Pérez-González 2006; Susam-Saraeva 2010), quality issues and their differences with regard to professional or commercial translation (Pérez-González 2006 & 2007, Bogucki 2009). For example, the emergence of anime fansubbing is attributed by Leonard (2005) to two factors: (i) the lack of translated works done by professionals, (ii) fans' desire for more authentic translations as professionally translated anime lose too much of the distinct Japanese flavour. As for activist subtitling, Pérez-González (2012) argues that subtitlers can be politically engaged mediators and use subtitling as a means of political resistance. This indicates that amateur subtitling not only plays an important role in intercultural communication, but also extends its influence into people's efforts for advancing radical democracy. Drawing on Stöckl's multimodal approach, Pérez-González (2007) explores the differences between fansubbing and the mainstream professional subtitling, one of which is the variety of fonts, colours and layout of the subtitles done by fansubbers. Implicit in the paper of Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz (2006) is the impact of fansubbing on commercial audiovisual translation norms.

In terms of genre, discussions have touched upon amateur translation and interpreting in various settings, such as Wikipedia volunteer translators (Dolmaya 201), community interpreting (Hokkanen 2012; Neather 2012), medical interpreting (Schouten et al. 2012), media reports (Harding 2012), emergency response (Munro 2010), and education-oriented resources like Open Yale courses and TED talks (Chen & Qian 2013; Olohan 2014). Notwithstanding the breadth of relevant literature, a clear emphasis has been placed on audiovisual translation, in particular Japanese anime and manga, and film subtitling (Hatcher 2005; D'áz-Cintas & Muñoz 2006; Pérez-González 2007 & 2012; Lee 2009; Izwaini 2014). Similarly, for Chinese scholars, research on amateur translation in the country is heavily focused on groups and individuals subtitling anime, foreign films and TV drama series (Ma 2012; Yang 2012; Yu 2012; Hei 2013). The scholarly focus on anime and film subtitling can be explained by the fact that these practices have existed for a relatively longer period of time.

However, there is a general lack of discussion in TS on amateurs translating music-related texts, despite evidence that amateur translation is now having a significant impact on the global spread of songs. Chih-Chieh Liu's research (2010) is one of the very few studies on the practice of fans subtitling MVs. Based on the video of *Sorry Sorry*, one viral Korean song released by South Korean boy band Super Junior in 2009, she discusses the Chinese subtitles by a Taiwanese fan in relation to the issue of authorship. It has to be pointed out that the subtitles under discussion are more like Chinese characters with similar pronunciation, as phonetic subtitling is a usual practice in Taiwan to parody pop culture for comic effect. However, such homophonic translations of lyrics sometimes fail to convey the original meaning accurately. Given the scarcity of research on amateur translation of songs, this chapter intends to broaden the scope of current research on amateur translation by focusing on fan involvement in song translation.

The research reviewed so far has approached the issue of non-professional

translation from various perspectives, such as amateurs' motivations, production routines and influence of their work on both the receivers and the society as a whole. These perspectives provide valuable insights and directions for the current chapter. By similarly discussing issues including the motivations of participants and their workflow in song translation, their translational strategies, its legality and relationship with music industry, this chapter seeks to identify the similarities and differences between amateur translation of songs and other mainstream genres. Problematizing the issue of how amateurs translate songs, this chapter ultimately aims to shed more light on the distinctive role of music fans in introducing and translating foreign songs for Chinese audiences.

### **5.3 Different Types of Fan Engagement in China's Song Translation Activities**

As indicated earlier, the average Chinese people have now wider and easier access to international musicians and singers. However, it is known to many that the Chinese central government practices strict Internet censorship and control, or "the Great Firewall of China", in an effort to screen the Internet content and prevent political dissent. As a result, many foreign media service providers and social networking websites such as Youtube, Facebook and Twitter have been inaccessible in mainland China (unless the Internet user has installed a virtual private network). Nevertheless, these blocked websites nearly all have Chinese counterparts, where people befriend each other and share information. Against this backdrop, different amateur translation networks have been formed on the Internet in China.

In the following section, I will discuss in detail how amateurs and music fans take up song translation activities on China's three different online platforms briefly mentioned in Section 3.3.2.

### 5.3.1 Douban Group

As implied in the brief introduction of the Douban website in Section 3.3.2.1, for any groups formed on Douban, the involvement and communication of the group members is significant. Douban is a catalyst in bringing like-minded people together while the task of producing content and promoting interaction within the group remains with the group members.

A ‘*geci fanyi*’ 歌词翻译 [lyrics translation] keyword search for relevant groups shows that around ten translation groups have formed on Douban whereas another three groups appear using ‘*gequ fanyi*’ 歌曲翻译 [song translation] as the keyword.<sup>71</sup> These groups vary greatly in terms of member numbers. For example, as of 18 November 2013 when I began my online search, the groups entitled ‘*Ribenyu geci fanyi*’ 日本語歌詞翻訳 [Translating Japanese Song Lyrics] and ‘*Fanheilei geci fanyi xiaozu*’ 泛黑类歌词翻译小组 [Translating Lyrics of Black Metal Music] had 2,361 and 2,081 members respectively. In contrast, the group ‘*Wo jiuai fanyi yingwen geci*’ 我就爱翻译英文歌词 [I Just Love Translating English Lyrics] and ‘*Faxi gequ fanyi*’ 法西歌曲翻译 [Translating French and Spanish Songs] only had 5 and 2 members at that time. A closer look at these groups’ slogans (see Appendix 3) testifies to Douban’s operational idea, because these groups, big or small, consist of like-minded members. All these group creators and members love foreign songs and have a desire to translate or exchange relevant translations, although they are interested in different artists or languages of songs. A brief content analysis of existing posts reveals the following features:

Firstly, groups usually have a clear perception of themselves, which can be evidenced from the way they name the group, their preferences of songs and their expectation of how to administrate and maintain the group. For example, besides

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<sup>71</sup> See <http://www.douban.com/group/search?cat=1019&q=歌词翻译> and <http://www.douban.com/group/search?cat=1019&q=歌曲翻译> (last accessed November 2013). Admittedly, the search result for groups is not exhaustive as some groups’ names may not contain the key words I use.

detailing certain requirements in the group description, the creator of the group *Ribenyu geci fanyi* explicitly states the rules for joining the group in an extra post<sup>72</sup> as follows:

- a. Everyone is welcome to join the group, regardless of the translation competence, as long as you like what we do.
- b. Original work is preferred. If the translation is cited from someone else, please attribute your source and provide the link to the webpage.
- c. Feel free to use the group as a communication platform for discussing the meaning of the words.
- d. Most importantly, there is no point for you to join the group if you just want to be a lurker. All the discussions within the group are open to Douban users, so do not bother to join.

The post acts as an open call for active participation and original translation. Each group may have its own rules but one thing in common is that nearly all the translations convey the literal meanings of lyrics without seeking singability in the Chinese language. In short, they belong to the ‘prototype category’ of song translation as covered in Section 2.4.1. That is why most of the posts have chosen ‘歌词翻译’(geci fanyi) as a tag or keyword. It is worth mentioning that although these groups primarily provide Chinese translations of the words which are semantically close to the foreign lyrics, some of the participants are actually curious about how other dimensions of a song are dealt with. In other words, for amateur translators, although the purpose of their translations is to be read, some of them are aware of the breadth of possible meaning in a song. Having such awareness can sometimes trigger interaction amongst the group members, as can be seen in the following example of a related discussion between one group member and the group

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<sup>72</sup> For more information about the post, visit <http://www.douban.com/group/topic/10517176/> (last accessed 26 January 2014).

creator:<sup>73</sup>

Simon-nomiS: Sama (the group creator's English name), when you translate the lyrics, do you treat lyrics as pure text or take music into consideration at the same time?

Sama: I am still new to song translation and for the moment, I only focus on the textual closeness but I try to follow the music style. However, it would be beyond my capability if I have to maintain the rhythm, rhyme and other aspects.

Sama's reply aptly illustrates that besides concentrating on sense, she pays attention to recapturing the style of the original song. In another group, issues such as verbal musicality and rhyme have been similarly mentioned in some comments on one post about how to translate English songs into Chinese.<sup>74</sup>

James: I am curious as to whether people will sing the lyrics translated into Chinese. Why not retain the song theme and rewrite lyrics accordingly?

NowhereMan: I think song translation is a matter of one's own interpretation of the lyrics which remains faithful to the original, and has some literary flair and rhymes.

Secondly, participation seems to have been restricted to a small number of active individuals in most groups despite that everyone is welcome to provide translations of songs. Except for group leaders and a certain few dedicated members, the majority of the group members rarely provide translations or comment on others'

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<sup>73</sup> Visit <http://site.douban.com/173899/widget/board/9717073/?start=10> for original discussion thread in 2012 (last accessed 16 January 2016).

<sup>74</sup> Visit <http://www.douban.com/group/topic/1653134/?qq-pf-to=pcqq.c2c> for the post in 2007 and some subsequent comments (last accessed 16 January 2016).



work. As introduced earlier, as long as one becomes a registered user and joins the group, there are no further restrictions on one's activities in Douban groups. However, it is always the same small number of members who are found to initiate discussions through posts. Most of the other members keep silent and some occasionally respond to the posts. Some active members have realized this and made efforts to elicit more participation, but still, the reaction towards the call for more participatory responses remains lukewarm.

Due to a lack of enthusiastic and persistent contributors, many groups have been discontinued. Some members are even found to have cancelled their registration with Douban.<sup>75</sup> A majority of the groups were established between 2010 and 2011. The groups had the largest number of posts in the first period after formation and the interaction dwindled gradually, with sporadic updates after 2013. The group 'Yingwen geci fanyi jihua' 英文歌词翻译计划 [The Translation Project of English Lyrics], formed in November 2010, is an illustrative case. As of 18 November 2013, the group was found to have a total of 19 posts, half of which were contributed by the group creator. What's worse, few posts received replies, with sparsely 2 or 3 other members offering supportive comments or voicing different views. At the time of writing this chapter in March 2014, the situation did not improve and for many members, the gap between their first posts and their recent updates had exceeded one year. This observation echoes previous research on online knowledge sharing by Davenport and Prusak, who indicate that "[t]he medium turns out not to be the message and does not even guarantee that there will *be* a message" (1998: 19, original emphasis).

Such lack of participation is not exclusive to Douban groups themed on song translation. According to Cao (2011), sluggishness seems to be a common problem for many groups on Douban. Although some active users are vigorously promoting communication within the group by initiating discussions, most users tend to act as

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<sup>75</sup> If a registered user of Douban website cancels his or her account, this will be shown in his or her profile information later.

lurkers instead of commenting on others' posts or participating effectively in discussions.

Finally, how to achieve and sustain effective interaction among members may be challenging for big groups, but for small groups, attracting new members to join is not easy, either.

As indicated earlier, Douban users are allowed to set up new groups freely, which results in a rapid increase of group numbers and types. This helps to meet users' different needs, but inevitably, has spawned many homogeneous groups. In other words, discussion threads themed on song translation may not have necessarily been posted by members of groups devoted to song translation. This may help to explain the fact that using the subject search of '歌词翻译' (geci fanyi), the posts on Douban website have totalled over 6940,<sup>76</sup> far more than the total number of posts among the groups found with a keyword search as mentioned previously. For example, one user posted a discussion thread titled "this is my first DIY with all the lyrics translated by myself, and any suggestions are welcome" in 2013.<sup>77</sup> This user, however, does not belong to any of the translation groups I have included in the Appendix 3, and instead, he is in the group called 'Zixue riyu zhong' 自学日语中 [Self-Studying Japanese]. This again implies that translating songs can be motivated by language learning.

Paradoxically, groups which aim to build themselves as a platform for people to discuss and share song translations are in dire need of participants. Take the group titled 'Fanyi geci' 翻译歌词 [Translating Lyrics] for example, its profile shows that the group creator and administrator is the same person, who is also the only member in the group. The group was created on 26 September 2010 and interestingly, this

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<sup>76</sup> It has to be mentioned that this figure shows the search results as of 27 February 2014. A change of the total number can happen as time goes by, as can be seen at <http://www.douban.com/group/search?cat=1013&q=歌词翻译> (last accessed 11 January 2016).

<sup>77</sup> The post is available at <https://www.douban.com/group/topic/39406009/> (last accessed 11 January 2016).

user account was cancelled on 13 April 2011.<sup>78</sup> One possible reason may be that no other Douban user responded to his or her call for participation, which must have dampened the enthusiasm of the group creator.

This brings to the fore the issue of divergence-convergence dilemma pointed out by Cao (2011). According to her, Douban's divergence of users fragmented in too many similar groups has a negative impact on the convergence of users and on their enthusiasm to contribute to groups in the long term.

Up to now, the sporadically updated posts in some groups or newly emerged replies to previous posts indicate that users are still using Douban Group as a platform for song-translation related communication. However, the total number of posts and subsequent discussions on song translation on Douban is much less than in previous years. Based on what I have presented above, it can be concluded that as many user accounts are nowadays dormant with no truly active participation, making the communication among Douban group members less than effective. Such loss of the user share, in my opinion, partially results from the competition from other online communities, two of which will be detailed in what follows.

### 5.3.2 Baidu Knows (<http://zhidao.baidu.com/>)

Based on the brief overview of how Baidu Knows operates in Section 3.3.2.2, this section intends to explore the questions and answers in the context of song translation. Likewise, a search for the Chinese keywords ‘歌词翻译’ (*geci fanyi*) and ‘歌曲翻译’ (*gequ fanyi*) in Baidu Knows could yield 70 million and 10 million relevant questions respectively, according to the statistics in late January 2014. Admittedly, not all these questions are necessarily asking for Chinese translation of foreign songs or requesting to have certain lines of lyrics translated in the community. It should also be noted that there exists some overlap among these questions as

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<sup>78</sup> The group page is available at <https://www.douban.com/group/288011/> (last accessed 11 January 2016).

different people can ask the same question in different ways. However, the very large number of questions gives a hint that Baidu Knows has been widely used by Chinese individuals for seeking an understanding of foreign songs. As said earlier, most questions are found to be succinct and descriptive, as evidenced in Figure 5.1.



Figure 5.1 Screenshot of One Question on the English Song *Home* (2005)

As can be seen on the screenshot,<sup>79</sup> the person who posted the question in the form of a direct call for the lyrics translation of *Home*, adding the information that “the song is sung by Michael Bublé and the band Westlife has a cover version. I need the song together with its Chinese translation.” The question has been put in the category of ‘European and American Pop Music’. Although the asker did not provide extra points for the answer, it still got a reply from a Level 7 user who has a best answer rate of 47%. The answer received 33 comments and 646 thumb-ups. Several interesting findings have derived from browsing through more content on the website, as shall be discussed below:

Firstly, questions, in most instances, simply request the translation of the lyrics of people’s favourite foreign songs. This is the same as what we have seen in Douban groups. However, Chinese people seem to make constant use of Baidu Knows which offers a good response rate. Most of the questions garner at least one answer and a

<sup>79</sup> Available at [http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/158935828.html?loc\\_ans=471783338](http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/158935828.html?loc_ans=471783338) (last accessed 20 January 2016).

great many comments or ‘thumb-ups’. In addition, relevant questions on Baidu Knows involve songs in a variety of non-English languages such as French, Korean, Japanese, Italian, Thai, Spanish, German, and Hindi.

It has been noted that the total number of search results using the same keywords in Baidu Knows far exceeds that of Douban Group. In addition, Baidu Knows offers search results of different time periods. It is interesting to note that many questions asked in Baidu Knows go hand in hand with the popularity of the songs. For instance, the hit song *Fox* by Norwegian duo Ylvis was released in September 2013. Correspondingly, many questions regarding the song, including its Chinese meaning, have been asked by Baidu Knows users since October of the year.<sup>80</sup>

Secondly, despite the seemingly large amount of contribution in Baidu Knows, there is no guarantee of the quality in both the contributed translation and comments on the answer. Some answer providers were actually copying and pasting the translations done either by translation software such as Google Translate or by other people. A user asking for the Chinese translation of an Italian song *E l’Alba Verrà* (2008) is a case in point, as the user emphasises that “please do not provide an answer done by a translation machine. If your translation is good, I will give you extra points, thanks in advance”.<sup>81</sup> This shows that original and good translation is much desired by the question asker, who is aware that answers may not be of good quality. Some answers seem to get much feedback, however, many of the comments are the same and actually meaningless. The example shown in Figure 5.2 reveals that unconstructive comments are rather common.

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<sup>80</sup> <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/917958679008040899.html> is one example (last accessed February 2014).

<sup>81</sup> The question can be retrieved on <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/90264345.html> (last accessed 1 March 2014).



Figure 5.2 Screenshot of one Question on *Rolling in the Deep* (2011)<sup>82</sup>

As displayed in the screenshot, the asker not only demanded the Chinese meaning of the lyrics of *Rolling in the Deep* but also that the translation could fit the original rhythm. The question received 723 comments, 4654 likes and 29 dislikes in late January 2014, which seems to have initiated good interaction at first glance. However, among the 723 comments, most of them were in the identical form, which read as “Awesome answer, I like it very much!”, “The answer is so professional, you deserve my worship!”, and “Your answer is very helpful to me”.<sup>83</sup> Only a few comments differed from such views, like the one “Unbelievable, how come the translation can be matched with the rhythm! Also, you simply have copied the answer from somewhere else, \*sigh\*...”.<sup>84</sup>

Previous studies suggest that the answer quality varies drastically on community question-answering sites (Agichtein et al., 2008; Chua & Banerjee 2013; Suryanto et

<sup>82</sup> The question is available at <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/371740979.html> (last accessed 17 July 2015). Comments mentioned below are also available at this website.

<sup>83</sup> They are the translations of “*dade taihaole, nuzan* 答得太好了，怒赞!， “*louzhu huida de lao zhuanye le, mobai nin* 楼主回答的老专业了，膜拜您” and “*nide huida bangwo damang le* 你的回答帮我大忙了!” respectively.

<sup>84</sup> The original Chinese is “*nail duishang jiezou le, chayuanle, yeshi nail fuzhi de ba, ai* 哪里对上节奏了，差远了，也是哪里复制的吧！唉!!!”

al., 2009). It is therefore not surprising to find that the translations provided on Baidu Knows are of varying quality. One possible explanation for this is the rewarding mechanism of Baidu Knows, as whoever contributes to answering the query can accumulate certain points. Moreover, the slogan of Baidu Knows states that “on Baidu Knows, there will always be someone who knows how to answer your question”.<sup>85</sup> This aptly demonstrates the usefulness of the website but also raises the issue of ‘someone’. The question ‘who is the one’ is worth considering. Such indeterminacy and instability has a marked influence on the quality and credibility of the translation.

Thirdly, the answer seeker and provider rarely communicate with each other about how to translate foreign songs and related information, which might seem to suggest that there is little room for real interaction and discussion among the community users. As suggested by Lou et al (2011), online question-answering communities are characterised as ‘issue-oriented’ rather than ‘social-oriented’. Hence, the primary role of Baidu Knows lies in providing individuals with knowledge instead of socialising activities. Meanwhile, there is some evidence to suggest that knowing the identity of the knowledge contributor has a direct impact on the interaction between the knowledge seeker and provider (Nickerson 1999, Poston & Speier 2005; Ma & Agarwal 2007). However, like most websites, users of Baidu Knows are anonymous.

In summary, although people are actively asking questions related to the meaning of foreign songs in Baidu Knows, the effective communication is limited. With regards to the users who post questions, what they need is to find straightforward solutions from the responses of others. Answer providers are given some points in return. Such reciprocity, rather than users’ sense of community belonging, to a large extent, has contributed to the continuous use of Baidu Knows

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<sup>85</sup> The original Chinese reads “*baidu zhidao, zongyou yigeren zhidao ni wenti de da'an* 百度知道，总有一个人知道你问题的答案。”， available at <http://zhidao.baidu.com/> (last accessed 10 January 2016).

by Chinese people to solicit lyrics translations for their favourite foreign songs.

### 5.3.3 Video Streaming and Sharing Websites

Section 3.3.2.3 has briefly introduced some background information on video streaming and sharing websites where subtitling of MVs takes place. As Reiss and Feineman suggest, the music industry has “never underestimated the importance of image, or been afraid of enlisting fashion, magazines, film, or television to help the fan hear the music” (2000: 11). This implies that fansubbers may need to invest more time and energy than those on Douban Group and Baidu Knows, given that MV is a type of audiovisual text. Sokoli identifies some distinctive features of audiovisual texts, including “reception through two channels: acoustic and visual, significant presence of nonverbal elements, synchronisation between verbal and nonverbal elements and predetermined succession of moving images-recorded material” (2009: 38). These features enable simultaneous reception of music, lyrics and image on the part of MV viewer, but as a result, pose challenges to fansubbers. In the following analysis, I will examine the way MV fansubbing groups deal with these problems. It may be useful to take a look at who is engaged in subtitling first.

#### 5.3.3.1 Cooperative and Competitive

Table 5.1 provides a relatively comprehensive list of the main contributors specialised in subtitling MVs on Youku and Yinyuetai.<sup>86</sup> The key parameters measuring their popularity consist of the number of downloads, viewing figures (or then number of saving the video for later viewing) and the number of their followers

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<sup>86</sup> The list is compiled on the basis of my own viewing of subtitled videos and information provided by LD, a relatively established fansubber on Yinyuetai (who is actually the video-maker, together with LC, his working partner, i.e. the translator, that constitutes my case study, which will be detailed in Section 5.4). LD edited a video for introducing some main MV fansubbers, available at <http://v.yinyuetai.com/video/862768> (last accessed 28 January 2016).



either on Yinyuetai or Sina Weibo. As can be seen from the Table, MV fansubbers can form a team or choose to work individually, asking for others' help when necessary. One possible explanation is that MVs normally last only three to five minutes, much shorter than a TV episode or movie. It is very clear that these amateur groups have developed their own preference of songs chosen to be subtitled. Though they mainly subtitle English songs, the song genres they have covered are quite diverse, ranging from pop to R&B, country music and film songs.

Table 5.1 Information of Some Amateur MV Subtitling Groups and Individuals

<b>Name(Subtitler)</b>	<b>Choices of Songs</b>	<b>Translator</b>	<b>Sina Weibo Profile</b>
Fang1169 (female)	“European/ American female singers with beautiful voices”	Mainly herself	@Fang1169 “Free myself in music”
Ryan719x (male)	“Middle-aged male singers”	Friends	@叉了叉叉再再叉 “Fan of American TV series, movie, music”
Fan club of Katy Perry	“Priority to Taylor Swift, Katy Perry, Justin Timberlake”	Friends or himself	@nima 肉粒多 “Willing to share free HD movies,regular updates”
Miaowu subtitling group	Very comprehensive	Group members	@喵呜字幕组 “Music with attitude, original translation only”
Catherine baby(female)	“Powerful songs”	Herself	@凯瑟琳-baby “Fan of movie, western pop songs, American TV series, etc”
Music crazy	Personal	Friends or	@音悦疯 GaGa

gaga (male)	preference	himself	“Love music, film and video editing”
Starry wave (male)	His favourite MV only	Friends or himself	@星辰涟漪 hc A fan of Western pop music, American TV series and subtitling
Deefun subtitling group <a href="http://www.deefun.com/">http://www.deefun.com/</a>	The latest MV releases and hit songs	Group members	@迪幻字幕组 “Specialised in subtitling American teen dramas. Please contact me if you want to join or cooperate.”
LD (male)	His own preferences or hit songs	Mainly LC or himself	@尚恩 LC; @老赵 LD “Mainly subtitling Western Pop Song MVs”
The subtitling group for the Chinese Fan Site of Eminem	Songs of Eminem only	Group members	@EMINEM 中文网官方微博 Part of Chinese Fan Site of Eminem ( <a href="http://EMINEM.COM.CN">EMINEM.COM.CN</a> )
Ourden subtitling group <a href="http://ourden.net">http://ourden.net</a>	Hip-hop songs and hit tunes	Group members	@OURDEN “A team dedicated to promoting Hip-hop culture. We provide subtitled MVs, music reviews and downloading services.”

It is important to note that it is a common practice for these fansubbers to capitalise on Sina Weibo as an effective channel to communicate and promote their works. During the initial stage, they also tended to write ‘Help/Volunteer Wanted’

posts on the microblogging website to advertise any vacancies within the group. Take a post by Deefun subtitling group<sup>87</sup> for illustration.

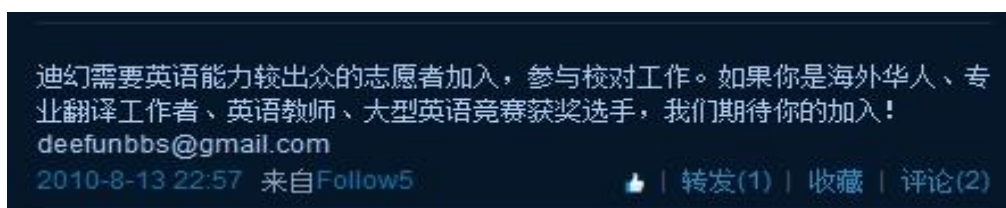


Figure 5.3 Screenshot of One Subtitling Group's Post

English translation: We need volunteers with a good command of the English language to help us with proofreading. If you are overseas Chinese, professional translators, English teachers or winners of major English competitions, we want you!

The subtitling group for the Chinese Fan Site of Eminem seemed to have a more comprehensive set of requirements as follows:<sup>88</sup>

**Requirements:**

Age: over 18. You are expected to be a fan of Eminem and have free time. Meanwhile, responsibility and genuine passion are required, as frequent personal changes will cause unnecessary inconvenience to our work.

Translator posts:

1. Be a competent writer with creativity and good command of English
2. Have a basic understanding of Eminem and Hip-hop.
3. Can finish translation tasks with accuracy and efficiency.

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<sup>87</sup> The post is available at <http://weibo.com/1641949434/24EMxd6d7?type=comment> (last accessed 10 February 2016).

<sup>88</sup> The post is available at [http://weibo.com/2134710483/zECGxrhW?ref=collection&type=comment#\\_rnd1463064658165](http://weibo.com/2134710483/zECGxrhW?ref=collection&type=comment#_rnd1463064658165) and <http://eminem.cn/bbs/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=45200#lastpost> (last accessed 20 March 2014).

(Notes: we will arrange a test beforehand to make sure that the quality of your translation is satisfying. This is because once subtitled MVs are uploaded, changes are hard to be made afterwards.)

Audiovisual resource hunter posts:

1. Love Hip-hop and Eminem, have a basic knowledge of various rappers.
2. Keep up with latest news of Hip-hop and Eminem.
3. Have a fast bandwidth, can download and upload the newest audio/video clips quickly.

Subtitler posts:

1. Be familiar with subtitle making
2. Be able to finish time axis, compress video streaming and upload videos independently
3. Be patient and tolerant of enormously long subtitles.

This demonstrates that members usually have specific labour division and work cooperatively under certain rules. However, it is interesting to notice that admission of new members is less common when a group becomes gradually established and stable. Miaowu Subtitling group was established officially in March 2011 and had 7410 followers on their Sina Weibo in early 2014. The following discussion in Figure 5.4 between the subtitling group and one of its followers shows a follower's interest in the group:<sup>89</sup>

**Follower:** May I join in?

**Miaowu group:** Sorry, we do not have any recruitment plan for the moment.

**Follower:** Then, can you say something about your group? I will follow you on Weibo.

**Miaowu group:** We are a small team made up of people who love doing

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<sup>89</sup> The discussion thread is available at <http://weibo.com/1142874770/zpwUjyXWn?type=comment> (last accessed 20 January 2016).

translation. With a focus on English songs, we are committed to sharing original and accurate translations and spreading good and thought-provoking music.



Figure 5.4 Screenshot of the Discussion on Sina Weibo

Judging from these posts, threads and fansubbers' profiles, a majority of the fansubbers are young workers or university students, both in China and abroad, who are interested in foreign music and movies. Here, love of foreign music and video editing provides a major impetus for their voluntary and organised cooperation.

The cooperation is not confined to members within any individual fansubbing group. Different groups also share related information and resources, as active MV fansubbers usually know and befriend each other. As noted earlier, YouTube and several other foreign social media websites have been blocked in China, so the general public does not have access to many foreign audio-visual products. However, amateur groups normally know how to break the firewall using various software and further access MVs of foreign songs. With specialised browser add-ons and plug-ins, they can directly download content from foreign websites to their computers. This, I think, is indispensable to their pooled wisdom. Groups often exchange views on how to break through firewalls and access the original videos, which is noticeable in their posts and discussions on the microblogging website.

Additionally, these fansubbing groups are willing to recommend others'

subtitled works. For example, when requested by a blog follower for more updates about Hip-hop culture and music, Miaowu admitted their insufficient knowledge in Hip-hop and introduced Ourden subtitling group, which updates followers with recent trends in Hip-hop on a daily basis. They also shared and recommended Ourden’s subtitled works on their Sina Weibo, as shown in Figure 5.5.<sup>90</sup>



Figure 5.5 Screenshot of One of Miaowu’s Sina Blog Posts

Ourden group uploaded their subtitled live performance of Eminem in May 2011, which was shared by Miaowu group, saying “How can I refuse such eye feast! Full support! Ourden is awesome!”

Nevertheless, competitions do exist among different groups. Wang (2009) points out that film fansubbers always strive to be the first whenever a new foreign movie or a new episode of a TV drama is premiered, as their viewers are inclined to download the subtitled version which comes out first. MV subtitling is no exception. The competitions become more intense as some websites, such as Yinyuetai, only

<sup>90</sup> The post is available at [http://m.weibo.cn/mblogwx?plg\\_nld=1&id=10737558996&plg\\_nld=1&plg\\_uin=1&uid=1142874770&wm=3333\\_2001&sourceType=qq&from=1065093010&plg\\_auth=1&v\\_p=11&plg\\_dev=1&plg\\_usr=1&sourceType=qq&plg\\_vkey=1](http://m.weibo.cn/mblogwx?plg_nld=1&id=10737558996&plg_nld=1&plg_uin=1&uid=1142874770&wm=3333_2001&sourceType=qq&from=1065093010&plg_auth=1&v_p=11&plg_dev=1&plg_usr=1&sourceType=qq&plg_vkey=1) (last accessed 20 January 2016).

allow one video of the same song to be on display. As a consequence, those who are slower will be deprived of the chance to upload the MV there and cannot find audiences for their works. This, sometimes, results in unnecessary redundancy and waste of human effort.

Take the subtitled video of *Best Song Ever* by British boy band One Direction for example. The original MV was released on the band's Vevo Channel<sup>91</sup> on 22 July 2013 but the Chinese subtitled MV undertaken by LC and LD appeared on Yinyuetai at midnight of 23 July, which was around 5pm British time given the time difference between UK and China, as can be seen in Figure 5.6.<sup>92</sup> Although such a rapid speed was appreciated by fans of One Direction, it caused dissatisfaction amongst other subtitling groups.



Figure 5.6 Screenshot of the Release Time of the Subtitled MV

### 5.3.3.2 Use of Translator's Notes and Trendy Language

One noticeable feature of fansubbing groups is their use of annotation or translator's notes, whilst trying to make the subtitles succinct and condensed given the time constraints. Some socio-cultural referents, such as the names of historical places and people, and cultural background knowledge, are translated literally, but their further explanations are provided, which are either superimposed statically on

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<sup>91</sup> Vevo is a video hosting service offering videos from three major record companies including Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and EMI. More information can be found at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vevo> (last accessed 28 November 2013).

<sup>92</sup> Visit <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/718744> for watching the video (last accessed 28 November 2013).

the top of the screen or included in a bracket besides the Chinese subtitles at the bottom.

The song *No Love*<sup>93</sup> (2010) by Eminem can be cited as an instance. As Figure 5.7 shows, the word ‘sweets’ in the line shown in the screenshot refers to a type of tobacco products producing sweet tasting smoke. Hence, the word shall not be conventionally thought as candies. To clarify this, the translator added a note stating that it was one of the favourite tobaccos by the protagonist in the MV, with a sweet-and-sour taste.



Figure 5.7 Screenshot of the Subtitled Video for *No Love*

Let us go back to the song *Best Song Ever*.<sup>94</sup> The MV begins with a chat between five members of the band (Niall Horan, Liam Payne, Harry Styles, Louis Tomlinson, and Zayn Malik<sup>95</sup>) and a production agency before the actual singing, which was also translated in the subtitled video. In the opening scene, all five band-members play different characters who work for the agency. In particular, Liam

<sup>93</sup> The video can be viewed at [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XMjUyNjQ4MjY0.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjUyNjQ4MjY0.html) (last accessed 02 February 2014).

<sup>94</sup> The official MV of *Best Song Ever* is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o\\_v9MY\\_FMcw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_v9MY_FMcw) (last accessed 20 January 2016).

<sup>95</sup> Zayn Malik, a former band member, left One Direction and went solo on 25 March 2015.



is playing a camp choreographer called Leeroy with platinum blonde hair secured by a pink headband. Leeroy (Liam) does a couple of snaps and arm movements before telling Niall to shimmy and Zayn to do a pirouette. As shown in the screenshot below,<sup>96</sup> the Chinese subtitles read as “Liam, you are different from them and just stay where you are because you are perfect”.<sup>97</sup> At the top of the screen, some implicit information is made explicit by the translator adding the Chinese words within the brackets which mean that “here, Liam is teasing the other four band members taking advantage of his role as the choreographer”.



Figure 5.8 Screenshot of the Subtitled Video for *Best Song Ever*

<sup>96</sup> Visit <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/718744> for watching the subtitled video (last accessed 28 November 2013).

<sup>97</sup> It has to be pointed out that in the subtitled video, the translator has made some mistakes in transcribing the English lyrics. The original English words shown in the screen shot should be “Liam, you stay exactly where you are because you are PER-FECT!”. These mistakes can be partially attributed to the fact that the translator felt pressed for time. For more information about the lyrics and the plot in the MV, please visit <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/onedirection/bestsongevermusicvideoversion.html> (last accessed 29 January 2016).

Another typical feature of their translations is the frequent use of trendy phrases, Internet catchwords and colloquial expressions. In the song *Acapella* (2013)<sup>98</sup> by Karmin for example, there is one line ‘Mama always said get a rich boyfriend’, which can be literally translated into “妈妈总说找个有钱的男朋友” in Chinese. However, ‘a rich boyfriend’ has been rendered into ‘*gao fu shuai* 高富帅’ [a tall, rich and handsome man], which has been a very popular way to describe a girl’s dream partner in China. Also, in the subtitled video of Icona Pop’s song *I Love It* (2012) by Deefun subtitling group,<sup>99</sup> the original lines “I don’t care, I love it, I don’t care” and “we gotta kill this switch” have been translated into Chinese lines “姐才不管呢，就喜欢这么着啊，管你妹啊” [sister doesn’t care, I love it, don’t bother your sister] and “这是病得治” [This is an illness in need of treatment] respectively. Recent years have seen an upsurge in usage of these expressions in people’s daily lives and online communication, particularly among the younger generation. ‘*jie*’ 姐 meaning ‘sister’ is increasingly used by girls to refer to themselves. ‘*nimei*’ 你妹 literally meaning ‘your sister’, has nothing to do with one’s real sister, and is often used in a flippant way among online friends to show dissatisfaction or joking. In the song *Ew!* (2014) sung by Jimmy Fallon and will.i.am,<sup>100</sup> the line “Look at look at this. OM-effin-G, what the eff” has been subtitled into “快来看看这个 额滴个神呐 我勒个去” [look at this, OMG, Holy Shit].<sup>101</sup> The Chinese phrases ‘额滴个神呐’ is a colloquial way of saying ‘Oh my God’ by using the homophones ‘*e*’ 额 [Eh] and ‘*wo*’ 我 [Me]. ‘我勒个去’ is an Internet slang, which was actually the transliteration of ‘Holy Shit’. The phrase became an instant hit after some online gamers used it on a forum. It has no negative meaning, but is increasingly used by people in daily lives to vent their

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<sup>98</sup> View the video at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/874269> (last accessed 17 January 2014).

<sup>99</sup> View the video at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/647434> (last accessed 17 January 2014).

<sup>100</sup> The official MV of this song is available at [https://www.google.co.uk/search?client=aff-cs-360se&ie=UTF-8&q=Jimmy+Fallon+feat.+will.i.am+-+Ew!+\(Official+Music+Video\)&](https://www.google.co.uk/search?client=aff-cs-360se&ie=UTF-8&q=Jimmy+Fallon+feat.+will.i.am+-+Ew!+(Official+Music+Video)&) (last accessed 30 June 2015).

<sup>101</sup> The subtitled video is available at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/2154462> (last accessed 17 July 2015).

emotions when feeling uncomfortable.

The above-mentioned examples have illustrated that fan-subtitled MVs are replete with Internet catchphrases. Fansubbers' employment of Internet buzzwords can be attributed to several reasons. Wen (2011) suggests that as most fansubbers are non-professional translators who feel unshackled from the constraints of orthodox translation theories, they tend to use trendy words familiar to most Chinese Internet users. Proper use of these words not only enables the subtitled MV to become funnier with more humour, but also brings it closer to the daily life of the audiences. Jin (2015) echoes a similar view that fansubbers are mainly young Chinese Internet users, who play an important role in creating and spreading these online slang phrases. By virtue of their easy comprehensibility, Internet catchphrases are particularly suitable for fansubbing given the spatio-temporal constraints. Similarly, according to LC (the translator in my case study) in my personal correspondence with him in late 2015, the main reason for him to adopt these vernacular expressions is that nowadays many pop songs depict the everyday lives of the young people and trendy words fit in well with the youth audiences of popular music. It is thus a funny way of targeting the concerns of his peers and making subtitles for people of his own community.

However, as revealed by LC, over-using Internet catchphrases or local vernacular expressions sometimes makes his translation look unprofessional and 'out of the scene'. Therefore, some audiences may not accept his translations, as can be seen from some comments.<sup>102</sup> Besides, LC points out a problem related with the use of current slang words as they are fleeting in nature. To some extent, Internet catchphrases mirror the ever-fleeting present of life. As pointed out by Wen (2011), as the world undergoes changes, new things will emerge. An expression can be

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<sup>102</sup> LC mentioned one of his subtitled MV in which his use of slang languages has triggered some dissatisfaction, like the comments “字幕翻译实在是不忍直视” [I cannot bear looking at the translation] on 19 November 2014 on “我也是醉了” [I am speechless and I cannot understand this translation] on 1 November 2014. The video and relevant comments are available at <http://v.yinyuetai.com/video/2144135> (last accessed 28 January 2016).

considered fun and trendy one day, but it can grow out of date and vanish on another day. This constitutes a potential problem that the subtitles may not be easily understood by people who lack relevant background information about the adopted Internet catchphrases.

On average, these videos have received more comments than the lyrics translation in Douban groups and Baidu Knows. And feedback is fast and direct. On the one hand, this is possibly due to the fact that a great many music fans watch MVs on video streaming websites as a way of listening to music nowadays. What's more, viewers can get points if they leave comments on the videos, which further allow them to download their favourite videos. On the other hand, mutual interaction between the fansubbers and viewers has been facilitated by the popularity of Sina Weibo among both groups. Viewers have opportunities not only to articulate their demands and preferences but also to show appreciation and support. The below lists some common comments the viewers leave after watching the videos:

Good things need to be shared. I know your subtitles are always good.<sup>103</sup>

The translation came out so fast. I just want to have a subtitled MV. Could you give me a link to download it?<sup>104</sup>

Thank you for your efforts. The translations are good.<sup>105</sup>

Could you subtitle xxx? (A certain song named by the viewer)<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The original Chinese comment “好东西是需要推广的~我是知道你做的字幕都很好的” on 21 August 2013 is available at

[http://weibo.com/2343916415/A5O8fbEVK?from=page\\_1005052343916415\\_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#\\_rnd1463059925963](http://weibo.com/2343916415/A5O8fbEVK?from=page_1005052343916415_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment#_rnd1463059925963) (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>104</sup> The original Chinese comment “翻译的真快，就想要个有字幕的，给个下载可以么” on 28 January 2013 is available at

[http://weibo.com/2343916415/zgrf8t2va?from=page\\_1005052343916415\\_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment](http://weibo.com/2343916415/zgrf8t2va?from=page_1005052343916415_profile&wvr=6&mod=weibotime&type=comment) (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>105</sup> The original Chinese comment “感谢制作~~翻译得很赞” on 11 August 2013 is available at <http://weibo.com/2343916415/A4ftp3p9L?ref=collection&type=comment> (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>106</sup> One example is the comment “求做 Teardrops on my guitar” [Could you please subtitle Teardrops

It is better to have (Chinese) subtitles.<sup>107</sup>

Good translations add bonus to the MV.<sup>108</sup>

These positive comments can strengthen the willingness of fansubbers to contribute more subtitled videos and perform better. However, it does not negate the fact that fansubbing groups are sometimes confronted with criticism or doubts. The posts below offer insights into how amateur subtitling groups are responsive to viewers' doubts.

In subtitling the MV of Olly Murs's *Dance With Me Tonight* (2011), Miaowu Group added some special effects to the lyrics' display. According to them, this is because the lyrics of the song were easy to follow and understand. The lyrics turned out to be in an unconventional colourful font and flashed very quickly. As evidenced in Figure 5.9, one viewer commented "subtitles are too showy and of little use, what a fool!", which angered one translator of the group, who later refuted arguing that

If we maintain the usual font and style for our subtitles, people say we are dull with little creativity. But once we make certain changes, we are criticized for presenting unclear subtitles. If you cannot understand such simple lyrics, this can only prove that you lack basic English listening comprehension skills. Why bother listening to English songs?<sup>109</sup>

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on my guitar (a song by Taylor Swift)?]" on 1 November 2014, available at <http://weibo.com/2343916415/Bu7kf312e?ref=collection&type=comment> (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>107</sup> The original Chinese comment "还是有字幕的好" on 14 February 2015 is available at <http://v.yinyuetai.com/video/2178343> (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>108</sup> The original Chinese comment "出色的翻译给MV加分了" on 25 July 2014 is available at <http://v.yinyuetai.com/video/677210> (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>109</sup> The post is available at <http://weibo.com/1264299455/xt1dp6kKx?type=comment> (last accessed 23 January 2016).



Figure 5.9 Screenshot of One Translator’s Rebuttal

Indeed, Miaowu subtitling group had a post earlier in 2011,<sup>110</sup> in which they asked for tolerance of their mistakes by underscoring themselves as non-professionals with a serious attitude. As Figure 5.10 below shows,



Figure 5.10 Screenshot of the Group’s Post Looking for Encouragement

We wonder why it is so hard for some people to give us some encouragement

<sup>110</sup> The post is available at [http://weibo.com/1142874770/eAhCFP8fCXD?ref=appreciation&type=comment#\\_rnd1463119128857](http://weibo.com/1142874770/eAhCFP8fCXD?ref=appreciation&type=comment#_rnd1463119128857) (last accessed 29 January 2016).

instead of finding faults with us. It is true that we are not professional translators, but we take a serious stance towards our translation. Given our sincere attitude, please do not be so mean to us. Thanks!

What emerges from the above discussion is that the practice of MV fansubbing groups has its own features, which distinguish it from the other two communities covered in Section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. Different fansubbing groups compete with each other. Cooperation, however, is also common among MV fansubbers. Regarding the main strategy observed with MV fansubbers, they are mainly translating the lyrics but have to take into consideration other audio-visual features of the video. Furthermore, fan translators seem to be acutely aware of trendy expressions and colloquial terms, many of which have been employed to address the culture-specific differences. For culture-specific terms in songs, amateur translators tend to use glosses or translator's notes, which is common among amateur translation of other genres, such as film and anime. Last but not least, MV fansubbing groups and fellow fans often interact with each other.

### 5.3.3.3 Copyright Dilemma

The popularity of peer-to-peer file sharing and illegal downloading has a marked negative impact on the music industry in the new digital environment (Dilmeri et al. 2011). Amateurs usually download MVs illegally, which constitutes piracy in the first place. Furthermore, they translate the lyrics and distribute their subtitled videos without gaining the permission from original singers or the music companies, which is a breach of Article 8 *Right of Translation* and Article 9 *Right of Reproduction of The Berne Convention*.<sup>111</sup> As a consequence, fansubbing MVs is

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<sup>111</sup> The full text of The Berne Convention is available at [http://keionline.org/sites/default/files/1971\\_revision\\_of\\_Berne.pdf](http://keionline.org/sites/default/files/1971_revision_of_Berne.pdf) (last accessed 28 January 2016).

arguably a copyright violation, but amateurs themselves generally do not take the issue seriously. However, in accordance with Article 36 of *Tort Law of the People's Republic of China*,<sup>112</sup> in case of infringement of another's interest caused by a network user, the network service provider shall be jointly and severally liable for the consequence of copyright infringement with the network user, if it fails to take any necessary measures. Due to this regulation, many UGC websites, video sharing websites in particular, have adopted their own content management guidelines and rules to avoid being sued for copyright violation (Zhang 2013; Wang 2012).

It is said that Yinyuetai has permission to stream MVs from international and domestic major record companies, including Time Warner, Sony BMG, Universal Music, B'in Music Co. Ltd, HIM International Music Inc., and Emperor Entertainment Group. The website has also signed contracts with several Korean entertainment companies such as SM Entertainment and JYP Entertainment.<sup>113</sup> It seems fansubbing groups on Yinyuetai are allowed more freedom in terms of copyrights; nevertheless, they have to comply with rules and regulations of the website itself. One post of Miaowu group in Figure 5.11 is a case in point.<sup>114</sup>

From today on, Miaowu Subtitling Group won't upload any videos onto Yinyuetai. During the past six months, you (the website) changed your assessment standards each month, and we have modified our videos for over ten times in order to meet your demands. According to you, there should be no information on subtitling groups! We contribute our work without any payment. We don't mind this but we are really angry about forbidding the presence of our

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<sup>112</sup> The Law's English version can be consulted at [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=182630](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=182630) (last accessed 28 February 2014).

<sup>113</sup> The website's statement of the copyright issue can be seen at <http://www.Yinyuetai/article/4> (last accessed 28 February 2014).

<sup>114</sup> The post is available at [http://weibo.com/1142874770/xh7XMBOSg?ref=collection&rid=0\\_0\\_0\\_2666972037096121526&type=comment#\\_rnd1463067841343](http://weibo.com/1142874770/xh7XMBOSg?ref=collection&rid=0_0_0_2666972037096121526&type=comment#_rnd1463067841343) (last accessed 03 January 2016).



names in the videos.

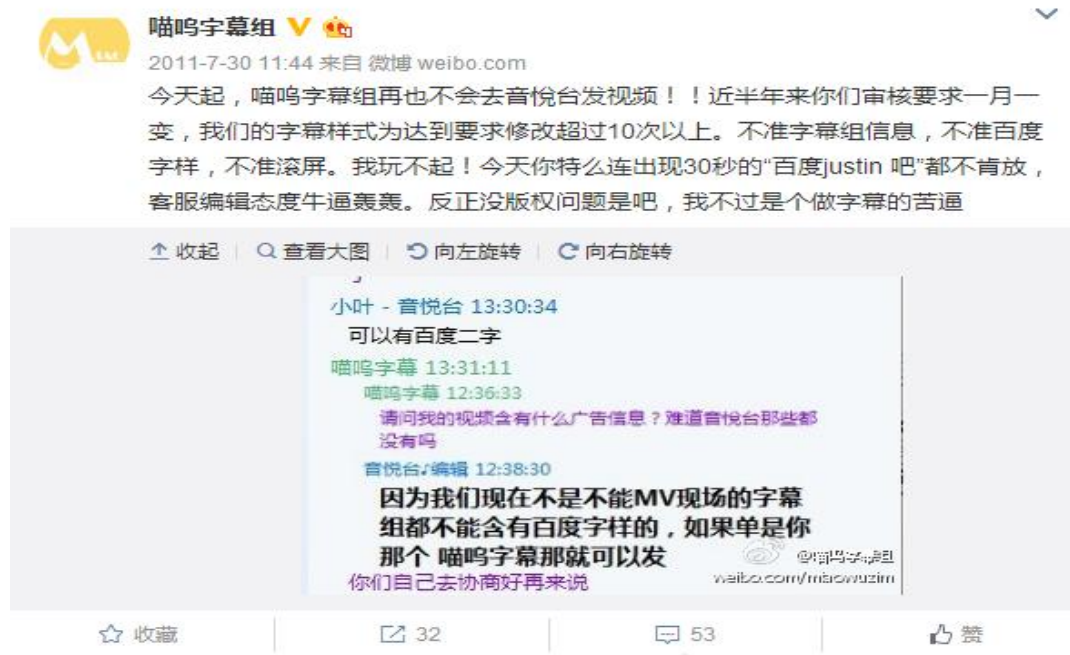


Figure 5.11 Screenshot of A Post about Yinyuetai by Miaowu Group

In response to the subtitling group's appeal, the Customer Services of Yinyuetai replied directly to the aforementioned post via its official Sina Weibo account by listing the following requirements for uploading videos to their website, as can be seen in Figure 5.12:<sup>115</sup>

1. The logo of the uploaded video (here refers to the watermark embedded in a video normally used by the video-maker to identify copyright ownership) should not contain web address or personal information. The size, display time and the frequency of the video logo shall not exceed that of the logo of Yinyuetai.
2. The display and audio quality of the MV should meet the normal standards

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<sup>115</sup> The reply is contained in the comments about Miaowu subtitling group's post, which is also available at [http://weibo.com/1142874770/xh7XMBOSg?ref=collection&rid=0\\_0\\_0\\_2666972037096121526&type=comment#\\_rnd1463067841343](http://weibo.com/1142874770/xh7XMBOSg?ref=collection&rid=0_0_0_2666972037096121526&type=comment#_rnd1463067841343) (last accessed 03 January 2016).

of Yinyuetai.<sup>116</sup> The video shall be complete in length and information.

3. The uploaded video shall not pre-exist on the website, nor shall it be in Karaoke format.

4. Information of the subtitling group can be put in the description bar on the website rather than in the video itself.

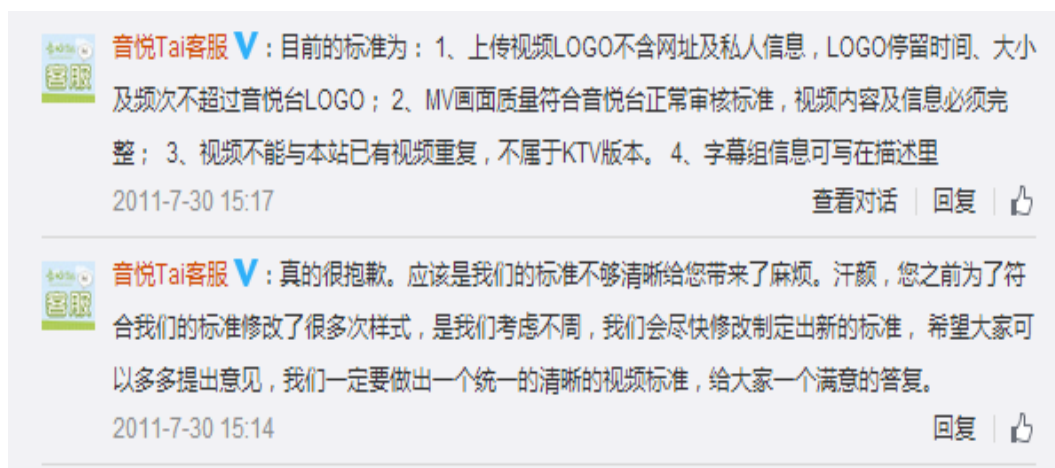


Figure 5.12 Screenshot of Yinyuetai's Requirements of Uploaded Videos

These requirements place limits on subtitling groups uploading and sharing videos, as in principle, not only their videos have to be in high quality, but also fansubbers cannot upload their subtitled video if there already exists a subtitled version of the same song. However, as told by the translator in my case study to be discussed in Section 5.4, most subtitling groups avail themselves of the grey area in the requirements (it only says 'uploaded video' rather than 'subtitled video'), and upload different subtitled versions to the website.

Let us continue with Miaowu group, which refused to accept the requirement of Yinyuetai and then shifted to Youku website. Again, problems related with copyright protection have emerged. For instance, they once stated that their subtitled video of *Someone Like You* (2011) by Adele when she performed in 2011 MTV Video Music Awards (VMA) was removed from Youku. The reason was simple:

<sup>116</sup> Most of the websites accept standard definition (SD) displays, namely 480i, but Yinyuetai asks for high definition videos, 720i.

Youku could not get the copyright permission from VMA to use their work.<sup>117</sup> At other times, their uploaded videos can be blocked for unclear reasons. As shown in the following post in 2012 (Figure 5.13), the group had been sharing their subtitled videos on Youku for two years but it was the first time that they came across the scenario. The copyright notice information bar simply read, “distribution is restricted in accordance with relevant regulations”.<sup>118</sup> These two examples clearly show us although MV fansubbing groups have put time and efforts into making the subtitled videos, they are likely to experience several constraints websites before the videos can reach their peer fans on video streaming websites.



Figure 5.13 Screenshot of Miaowu Subtitling Group’s Post

It is important, however, to note that though subtitled videos are subordinate to the verification and monitoring of websites, fansubbers still have a chance to distribute their subtitled videos. In accordance with Section 4 of China’s *Copyright Law*,<sup>119</sup> one can use copyrighted media content for non-commercial, sharing or

<sup>117</sup> The information was revealed by Miaowu group in their reply to a Weibo follower, who commented on one of their posts in 2011, available at <http://weibo.com/1142874770/xmXh060YF?type=comment> (last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>118</sup> The post is available at [http://m.weibo.cn/mblogwx?plg\\_nld=1&id=3441966526722726&plg\\_nld=1&plg\\_uin=1&uid=1142874770&wm=3333\\_2001&luicode=20000301&sourceType=qq&from=1065093010&featurecode=20000180&v\\_p=11&plg\\_auth=1&plg\\_dev=1&ext=sourceType%3Aqq&plg\\_usr=1&sourcetype=qq&plg\\_vkey=1](http://m.weibo.cn/mblogwx?plg_nld=1&id=3441966526722726&plg_nld=1&plg_uin=1&uid=1142874770&wm=3333_2001&luicode=20000301&sourceType=qq&from=1065093010&featurecode=20000180&v_p=11&plg_auth=1&plg_dev=1&ext=sourceType%3Aqq&plg_usr=1&sourcetype=qq&plg_vkey=1) (last accessed 20 January 2016).

<sup>119</sup> The Law’s English version can be consulted at

education purposes. These subtitled videos are often found to have enabled lively discussion on the singers and relevant topics, which to some degree, helps promoting the songs. Since MV fansubbing groups and individuals share their works for free, such ‘fair use’ seems to give them justification to survive and thrive.

MV fansubbing groups could infringe the MV copyright holders, but their subtitled videos can be copied without their permission by other users as well. They share the videos for free but usually credit their work to the translator and MV editor by mentioning their web names at the beginning of the video. They also urge viewers to give due credit if reposting the video somewhere else. However, this could not entirely protect their videos from inappropriate use. One translator posted on her Weibo in 2011 complaining that her translation was copied by someone without change, as in her words “I cannot stand this. I have to speak it out. Congratulations on me, I find my translation’s twin brother. ”, as can be seen in Figure 5.14.<sup>120</sup>



Figure 5.14 Screenshot of One Translator’s Post

Let us look at another example.<sup>121</sup> As shown in Figure 5.15 below, the

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[http://www.most.gov.cn/eng/policies/regulations/200412/t20041227\\_18307.htm](http://www.most.gov.cn/eng/policies/regulations/200412/t20041227_18307.htm) (last accessed 28 January 2014).

<sup>120</sup> The post is available at [http://m.weibo.cn/mblogwx?plg\\_nld=1&id=8487189503&plg\\_nld=1&plg\\_uin=1&uid=1264299455&wm=3333\\_2001&sourceType=qq&from=1065093010&plg\\_auth=1&v\\_p=11&plg\\_dev=1&plg\\_usr=1&sourcetype=qq&plg\\_vkey=1](http://m.weibo.cn/mblogwx?plg_nld=1&id=8487189503&plg_nld=1&plg_uin=1&uid=1264299455&wm=3333_2001&sourceType=qq&from=1065093010&plg_auth=1&v_p=11&plg_dev=1&plg_usr=1&sourcetype=qq&plg_vkey=1) (last accessed 10 January 2016).

<sup>121</sup> The discussion thread cited as an example here is available at

subtitling group for the Chinese Fan Site of Eminem disclosed that they initially uploaded one subtitled video to Youku and Tudou for sharing. When they decided to do the same thing on Yinyuetai, it turned out that someone already uploaded the same video without getting their consent and worse still, the names of the translator and video editor got erased. According to them, this was bothersome, as they deserved to have their names in the video at least, given the fact that they had sacrificed time and put efforts to make the subtitled video.



Figure 5.15 Screenshot of One Discussion Thread

It can be concluded that MV fansubbers are in a copyright protection dilemma, as their work involves unauthorized use of copyrighted material but are themselves subject to rights violation and other conditions or constraints imposed by websites. A typical recent example is that the American pop singer Taylor Swift pulled her catalogue off Spotify and other streaming services in November 2014.<sup>122</sup> China is no exception to Taylor's move of protecting the copyrights of her songs. Many of her songs, consequently, cannot be shared or listened to for free on Chinese websites, which directly impacts the practice of MV subtitling. Although some subtitled videos

[http://weibo.com/2134710483/eBTt9nDgcFG?type=comment#\\_rnd1462768837206](http://weibo.com/2134710483/eBTt9nDgcFG?type=comment#_rnd1462768837206) (last accessed 10 January 2016).

<sup>122</sup> A related report can be read at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-32114250> (last accessed 2 June 2015).

of Taylor still exist in Yinyuetai, many subtitling teams have chosen to make their own videos, thus averting a copyright infringement issue.

Taking the song *Blank Space* (2014)<sup>123</sup> for example, as for the line ‘love’s a game, wanna play’, its original visual presentation in the official MV is the screenshot in Figure 5.16. However, Figure 5.17 shows that the original image has been replaced with one image of the starry sky in another fan-made MV.<sup>124</sup> This illustrates the efforts of MV subtitling team to adjust their videos and minimise the external negative influence on their practice. To some extent, this constitutes a difference between MV subtitling and film subtitling. The images in a film are crucial for viewers to understand its plot, and cannot be substituted in the way the MV of *Blank Space* is changed. Again, this foregrounds the important role of lyrics and singing in a song, as one can still enjoy a song without visual presentation.



Figure 5.16 Screenshot of the Original Video for *Blank Space*

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<sup>123</sup> The original music video can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-ORhEE9VVg> (last accessed 3 July 2015).

<sup>124</sup> The fan-made MV is available at <http://v.yinyuetai.com/video/2164975> (last accessed 29 December 2015).



Figure 5.17 Screenshot of *Blank Space* Video Replaced by the Subtitling Team

To sum up, MV fansubbing groups have developed their distinctive features and their subtitled videos are largely met with positive reception in spite of their errors. MV fansubbing is driven by the rise of video streaming websites but also constrained by the websites' self-censorship regimes. To further understand the working mechanism of MV fansubbing, a case study will be presented in the following section.

#### **5.4 Case study of A Team Subtitling MVs**

In this section, I will present a case study of a small team actively engaged in subtitling English pop songs and with ongoing cooperation, drawing on an analysis of their subtitled MVs and my personal correspondence with them. The team consists of two members, one translator and one video-maker, who have collaborated for nearly three years since 2012 and successfully subtitled over 400 foreign songs as of the time of writing this in early 2015. Their sustained cooperation, prolific work and positive reception, I believe, can help us to gain a better understanding of how the amateurs collaborate, how they see their work themselves and how their work is perceived by the general public.

The translator LC hereinafter will be referred to as Liu,<sup>125</sup> his surname. Liu is currently a third-year undergraduate studying English in Central China as of writing this. He started to translate English songs in high school, when he was greatly fascinated by Shayne Ward, a British pop singer. According to him, translating lyrics is a good exercise for improving and polishing his English and translation skills. The subtitler, LD, hereinafter referred to as Zhao, his surname, is a post-production professional after studying video-making in university and is currently working in a media company. Zhao is also a huge fan of Western music. The two got to know each other in an online fan club of Shayne Ward. Given their shared interest, they decided to try subtitling MVs together, which led to their first subtitled video in July 2012. Although the two rarely meet face to face, they are well acquainted through Internet and mobile communication.

The following is a rough breakdown of their MV subtitling process:

1. Source acquisition (audio transcription if necessary)
2. Translate (a gist translation of lyrics only, no need for singability)
3. Proofread the translated script and send the completed translation for the time axis
4. Video encoding with the subtitles and synchronisation check
5. Upload the video for assessment by the website and further circulation

In most cases, it is the subtitler who obtains the MV and official lyrics, which is subsequently passed onto the translator. If the foreign lyrics are not available online, Liu has to transcribe the lyrics first. According to Zhao, he usually tries to obtain the original lyrics first, which could save Liu much trouble, as audio transcription is not easy. Only in rare occasions they have to pay for downloading the MVs. When I asked them their opinions of the copyright issue, the team replied “no comments, as copyright enforcement is poor across China”. Regarding their criteria for choosing

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<sup>125</sup> How to address them in this section is based on their suggestion. I have deliberately chosen to exclude details about their university and company name in order to protect their privacy.



what songs to be subtitled, I have been told that it is mainly a personal preference. For example, Zhao is a huge fan of Taylor Swift and thus her MVs are a must for their subtitling. They also take the music charts into consideration and subtitle new releases of popular singers, as the big names seem to be able to attract more visits. For example, Lady Gaga and One Direction have a large number of ardent followers in China, and their hit tunes rarely fail to attract viewers. Accuracy of the original lyrics is an essential prerequisite, as wrong lyrics inevitably result in wrong translation. Take the song *This Song Saved My Life* (2011) by Simple Plan as a case in point. The first line of lyrics in the subtitled MV reads, ‘I wanna star to letting you know this’, which should have been ‘I wanna start by letting you know this’. If the ST was right in the first place, Liu would have come up with a more accurate translation. This error was pointed out by a viewer later,<sup>126</sup> a lesson for them to use the online information cautiously in the future.

Liu is quite confident in his Chinese language proficiency, as he loves reading Chinese ancient poems and literary works. This can be evidenced in the abundance of four character phrases in his translations. Being a third-year English-major student as of early 2015, Liu did not receive formal training in translation when he undertook subtitling MVs.<sup>127</sup> Thus, Liu revealed that in the beginning, he was not familiar with any particular translation theories and his translation strategy was to capture the gist of what the song says and flexibly adjust within limits. “Within limits”, refers to his idea that the translator should base the understanding on the original song rather than adding too much subjective interpretation, as this could be misleading to other listeners. According to Liu, it is ideal if the translated lyrics are both faithful and singable. However, producing singable translation is extraordinarily hard, even

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<sup>126</sup> Visit <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/634027> for the mentioned video and the viewer’s comment on the mistake (last accessed 20 February 2014).

<sup>127</sup> In China, English major undergraduates normally receive specialized training and attend theoretical courses in translation (if the student chooses this) from the third year, with the first two years dedicated to developing the English language capability on a broad scale, such as listening, reading, speaking and writing.

though he knows the basics of music as he has been playing the violin for 7 years. Another consideration, as pointed out by Liu, is the needs of target viewers, who usually seek translation solely for understanding the song but prefer the singers' authentic singing. Thus, Liu does not care whether the lyrics can be sung or not, as further detailed below:<sup>128</sup>

I visit music forums and join relevant discussion boards, so basically I keep a close eye on what's going on in the music industry, such as what the hit tunes are, which singers have released new albums or singles recently, or whether the singer is going through a period of transition, and what the singer's unique style is. Hence, in my translation, I will try my utmost to reproduce the song story and mirror the style.

With regards to the question of what references he usually consults for translating the songs, I have been told by Liu that he normally relies on the information updated on singers' official websites, particularly during the period before the release of any new songs. He also makes good use of Google, Wikipedia and web-based dictionaries such as Urban Dictionary for more background information, but with caution. According to him, the background or any contextual information is very important for understanding the whole story behind the song. Certain lyrics or lines are often extremely culture bound and Liu usually provides explanatory notes accordingly. When asked about the standard number of lines and characters in subtitling, Liu stressed that there was no fixed rule on the exact number of words one subtitle line should contain, but he tried to condense his translation given the spatial-temporal constraints. Having gained more and more experience, Liu indicated that the average time he spent in translating a non-rap song normally exceeded no more than twenty minutes, including proofreading.

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<sup>128</sup> This is based on my personal correspondence with the translator in December 2014.

As suggested in the previous section, there exist fierce competitions among fansubbers in terms of the speed of releasing subtitled MVs. Initially, to avoid the scenario when the Chinese translations don't sync with the screen images, Liu always waited for the release of official MVs and started translation thereafter. However, it turned out this could cause a huge delay as everyone was racing against the time to be the first. Later, the team realised that it is a common practice for songs to be released prior to MVs, and that a music company will only shoot MVs of certain songs, such as those occupying the top position of music charts. Therefore, Liu tends to prepare the translations of some hit songs in advance nowadays and makes subsequent adjustments if necessary after the videos are released.

Liu only concentrates on the translation of lyrics whilst the technical aspects of subtitling such as timing and cueing are left to Zhao. According to Zhao, he loves downloading different MVs and making subtitles. As long as he is free, he can finish editing the video with corresponding subtitles within one hour. With regards to the presentation of the subtitles on the screen, Zhao has various kinds of software, which can set the fonts, colour, the display and movement of the subtitles. Popsb, EDIUS and Time Machine are the most common software packages he uses for editing videos. Special visual effects can be added depending on the style of the original song or his own preference. In *Love Story* (2008) of Taylor Swift, for example, subtitles were set in yellow colour and made to move horizontally like the karaoke-style display, surrounded by some dynamic icons.<sup>129</sup> If the synchronisation cannot be achieved, Zhao usually sends back the translation to Liu for adjustment, such as making the lyrics more succinct or omitting some specific details.

Once the video is finalised, Zhao logs into Yinyuetai and uploads the video for approval by the website administrator. The checking process could take several hours or even one day, which they claim to be annoying. Moreover, the team is becoming unsatisfied with the website's increasing focus on Japanese and Korean pop songs.

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<sup>129</sup> The subtitled video can be viewed at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/368888> (last accessed 9 February 2015).

They once thought of withdrawing from the website, but given their existing influence among the viewers, they decided to stay. Meanwhile, they started uploading the same video to both Youku and Yinyuetai. Apart from the two video streaming websites, Zhao uses Sina Weibo as another channel for sharing. URLs and HTML codes are always provided so that the video can be embedded into the blogging website where interested people can directly watch it. Viewers can send Zhao a private message if they want a link to download the file.

The two have attracted a substantial follower base on their separate Weibo accounts. Based on my analysis of their thousands of posts, Zhao always uses the “@” function of Sina Weibo to inform other fansubbers and some followers of the updates. This shows his strong desire to share their videos with more people and garner wider exposure. This is evidenced in their words “After you translate and finish a subtitled video, it is natural you want your efforts to be seen and recognized by more people.” It is interesting to note that Liu is always credited in the beginning of Zhao’s posts, which acknowledges the translator’s efforts. Besides information on their subtitled videos, Zhao regularly updates posts recommending his favourite foreign songs using the hashtag ‘#laozhao tuijian’ 老赵推荐 [Recommendations from Zhao]. Likewise, Liu tends to discuss foreign songs or movies on the blogging platform. This, to some extent, helps them to maintain the communication with the existing network but also attracts new followers. Their efforts have elicited many responses as people are willing to comment below or repost. This helps to further spread their videos and sustain the interaction. Some followers also use the blog as a way to communicate their wishes such as whether the team can edit a subtitled video of a particular song. Their interaction involves not only subtitling-related threads but also off-topic ones, such as their daily life or the latest social news. The following will provide a brief account of viewers’ responses to the team’s subtitled videos.

Generally, the team receives many appreciative and supportive comments but some of their videos have drawn mixed views, mainly concerned with the translation

of lyrics. One controversial aspect is obscenity in Liu's translation. According to Liu, this is one dimension of his translation style. He adjusts his translation to the style of the singer, lyrics and the MV but sometimes, the use of those words indicating obscenity is done deliberately. Take the song *Applause* (2013) by Lady Gaga for example, his translation contains words such as *laoniang* '老娘' [bitch] for the English lyrics 'I', *niyade* '你丫的' [fuck you] for 'you', and 'TM' (a phrase short for *ta ma de* '他妈的' meaning 'damn it', which sometimes appears as *te me de* 特么的) when there is actually no offensive information in the English lyrics. Some viewers show their disapproval, arguing these expressions are over-exaggerating and thus inappropriate, whereas others give their support claiming the translation is so cool and transmits an authentic feel of Lady Gaga.<sup>130</sup> Translation errors also lead viewers to criticise their subtitled videos. Liu acknowledged the presence of inaccuracies in his translations, particularly in earlier times. Some mistakes could have been easily avoided if not pressed for time. Liu cited one example, Rihanna's *Don't Stop the Music* (2007), when he did not check his translation for the sake of speed.



Figure 5.18 Screenshot of the Mistake in the Subtitled Video for Rihanna's Song

As Figure 5.18 shows, Liu stated his original Chinese translation was “这可是个私

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<sup>130</sup> For the subtitled video and comments, please visit <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/743401> (last accessed 10 February 2014).

人派对” [This is a private party], which basically reproduces the meaning of the English line ‘This is a private show’. However, due to carelessly choosing a wrong word among the results of using the Chinese typing software,<sup>131</sup> the Chinese translation turned into “这可是个死人派对” [This is a party for the dead]. After all, homophones abound in Chinese language and the Chinese expressions of ‘private’ (sī 私) and ‘the dead’ (sǐ 死) are just such a pair.

Another type of error usually results from unfamiliarity with the context or misunderstanding of culturally-bound expressions, particularly the puns and wordplay in rap music. That’s why to the translator, rap music is the most difficult and challenging genre. Let us look at the example of *Rap God* (2013) by Eminem,<sup>132</sup> a famous American rapper. The subtitled video received 127,109 views, 3,302 downloads and 289 comments during the three months after Zhao shared it on Yinyuetai in late November 2013. In order to translate this song, Liu spent two and a half hours non-stop, looking up puns and unfamiliar words in Urban Dictionary. He also solicited further help from some fans of Eminem in the forum. Correspondingly, subtitling the video took Zhao much longer than usual and Zhao had to omit some long explanatory notes due to too much information and fast-paced music. The difficulty of making the subtitles for this song can be seen from Zhao’s post on Sina Weibo in the example below.

Example: Zhao’s Post on subtitled video of *Rap God* and Comments on Weibo<sup>133</sup>

Zhao: #Zhao’s First Release# The translator consulted many references to translate the lyrics, good job. I stayed up to edit the video as the time axis alone took me two hours. This song has over 100 lines.

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<sup>131</sup> When using pinyin to type Chinese characters, one can sometimes get five words or characters sharing the same pronunciations despite different tones.

<sup>132</sup> See <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/821010> for the video (last accessed 2 February 2014).

<sup>133</sup> The post on Sina Weibo, together with the cited comments, is available at <http://www.weibo.com/2343916415/AkMtCwwHu> (last accessed 2 February 2014).

This post has been reposted by 84 times, and received 5 ‘likes’ and 18 comments, some of which are shown as follows:<sup>134</sup>

**ShadeRecords:** Is that true you typed ‘slapbox’ in the search bar of Youdao Dictionary,<sup>135</sup> and it appeared that ‘are you looking up the word ‘soapbox’? ’, so you just adopted the search result? So ridiculous to translate ‘slapbox’ into ‘soapbox’! How could you dare to upload such low-quality translation to Yinyuetai? The translator (mentioning Liu by using@ his account), you could be shameless but don’t spoil the singer. Come to our official website of Eminem, pay us tuition and we will teach you how to translate.

**Zhao:** No need for you to judge whether the translator is good or not, please watch your mouth.

**Zhao:** The translation is our own understanding; it is fine as long as we love it. We are only doing what we like. There is no need for us to ask for your opinion concerning where I should share our videos. By the way, you once invited me to do time axis for videos on your website. Thanks for the opportunity but I dare not go. A piece of advice for you----mind your own things, and we don’t need your concern.

**ShadeRecords:** Shit, are you feeling proud of your work dealing with the time axis? Why not translate songs? Also, your translator does really a bad job, which is just humiliating our Eminem. Do you really think that you can subtitle all genres of songs? Stay away from Eminem, we will not be cheated to share your stupid video.

**ShadeRecords:** No matter what you reply to me, you are just idiots. Don’t waste my time. It is so annoying to see you guys uploading videos of such poor

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<sup>134</sup> To highlight the interaction between Zhao and one particular viewer, some comments have been placed in the beginning, otherwise stated in a chronological order.

<sup>135</sup> Youdao 有道 Dictionary is an online dictionary developed by NetEase, one of China’s leading Internet technology companies.

quality here. Please find a better translator. There are many other dictionaries except Youdao Dictionary. Your ‘slapbox’ just made me laugh, how dare you share with others and make a fool of yourself?

**Viewer A:** Your subtitles are great, we do not necessarily want a MV with spectacular special effects, as a good translation is enough. Please continue with your work, come on! I hope today you can subtitle the live performance of Justin Timberlake in 2013 American Music Awards (AMV), his performance was so good!

**Miaowu subtitling group:** Zhao, you are working so hard. This song really needs efforts; Roy in our team is also tortured. Later, I myself also have to do the annoying time axis.

**Viewer B:** Salute to all subtitlers!

**Viewer C:** Excellent, I find that you are always faster than others.

**Viewer D:** In the line “You are just what the doc ordered”, Doc refers to the mentor of Eminem, Dr. Dre, who offered a contract to the singer. So this line means “He was just the right guy Dr. Dre wanted”. The translation of “All my people from the front to the back nod” is not appropriate, either. There is no association between ‘slapbox’ and ‘soapbox’.

**Ryan719x:** Great job!

**Viewer E:** The English lyrics are so fast but the subtitles are in sync with the image, so amazing, thanks!

**Viewer F:** Wow, two hours on time axis, hard work.

As can be seen from the discussion threads, some followers and previously mentioned fansubbers such as Miaowu subtitling group and Ryan719x offer encouraging words or constructive suggestions but the comments from the user name ‘ShadeRecords’ sound very harsh. ‘ShadeRecords’ is someone involved in managing the Chinese fan site of Eminem, who also subtitled the same video. It is said that



Zhao's video came out earlier and consequently influenced the reception of theirs. Although Liu did make some translation mistakes as pointed out by 'ShadeRecords', such sharp criticism, to some extent, constitutes a personal insult. Similar negative responses have happened on more than one occasion. Zhao's following post<sup>136</sup> in October 2013 to fight back against viewers' discontent with Liu's translation of the song *Survival* (2013) by Eminem is a good illustration:

I have to clarify that this translation is impossible to satisfy all the people as each of us has our own interpretation of a song, let alone the rap music. The translator is still studying in university, and to fully convey the connotations embedded in the lyrics is beyond his current capability. Translating and subtitling songs are just our hobbies, we are not professionals. There is no point for you to abuse us verbally if you don't like the video. Just leave us alone, no one begs you to watch the video.

In response to the criticism, Liu explained:<sup>137</sup>

I admit that those people who criticise us include strangers as well as some competitors, but I believe most of the viewers watch our subtitled videos with the pure aim of trying to understand what the particular song is about. For those who just come to find fault with us, I'd rather ignore. But I feel quite happy when seeing more and more people are doing MV subtitling, especially with many of my favourite songs.

Despite the criticism, the two both expressed their willingness to continue with MV subtitling. And they have become more and more careful about the translation in

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<sup>136</sup> Visit <http://www.weibo.com/2343916415/AdezDbclct> for the post (last accessed 19 December 2015).

<sup>137</sup> This is based on my personal correspondence with him on 17 February 2014.

order to live up to the expectations of their supporters. According to them, MV subtitling is where their interests lie and more importantly, they have become accustomed to the network and have become acquainted with lots of people who are passionate about the same things. Common interests in one singer can bring previous strangers together to meet at the same concert, which may further enable them to build a stronger tie with members of the community and even extend that connection to real life. For example, Liu revealed to me that he once met some friends he made online through MV subtitling in Guangzhou, China, one of the stops in the Avril Lavigne 2012 world tour.

Interestingly, both the translator and the subtitler do not think they are one fansubbing group but described their relationship as “cooperative”. This has partly to do with the flexibility in their work. To specify, if Liu is not sufficiently interested in the song assigned by Zhao, he can skip and wait for another song to his taste. Zhao, though more specialised in technical work, sometimes does translation himself, with Liu playing a supporting role as his proof-reader. Each of them has cooperated with others. Zhao has subtitled some non-English songs with translations contributed by other translators. For Liu, several other video makers have approached him for joint efforts to subtitle MVs, and in total, Liu has translated 100 songs for those other than Zhao.

Based on my recent communication with Liu in March 2015, some MV fansubbers are shifting their efforts to subtitling films and TV series. It is generally thought that getting no remuneration for their work is common to any amateur translation activity. However, there have been some gradual changes in film subtitling by amateurs in China, as some amateurs can now earn money. Liu cited two Chinese film-subtitling teams as examples, i.e. *Renren yingshi* 人人影视 [YYeTs] and *Zhuzhu leyuan* 猪猪乐园 [BTpig]. Their mechanism of making money involves many video streaming and sharing websites, who are competing with each other for attracting visitors. As for imported foreign films and TV series to be

streamed on these websites, they are likely to attract more viewers if the film has accompanying Chinese subtitles. Given the fact that translation agencies charge a high price for their translation services, video streaming websites turn to amateur subtitling teams whose work is deemed as more affordable and popular among viewers. Another way for film fansubbers to make profits is to let unskippable video advertisements run at the beginning of their subtitled films. That is to say, companies can buy slots, which typically last approximately 15 seconds before the video starts. This might constitute the main difference between MV subtitling and film subtitling, as according to Liu, an MV is usually less than 5 minutes, and not many people can tolerate a 15-second advertisement. In addition, the market potential of subtitled MVs seems smaller than that of subtitled films or TV series. As a consequence, Liu's team has not been approached by any video streaming website for paying them to subtitle an MV.

Ultimately, what has enabled this small team to stand out is their passion for MV subtitling, their sustained devotion and their respective strengths in video-making and language skills.

### **5.5 Beyond the Professional and Amateur Divide: A Bourdieusian Analysis**

An overview of China's online amateur song translation activities aptly shows us that the borderline between the producers and consumers of translation is being gradually blurred. This is a good illustration of 'participatory culture' in Jenkins' sense, where "fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content" (2006: 290). If we follow the definition of a 'fan' given by Reysen and Branscome to be "any individual who is an enthusiastic, ardent, and loyal admirer of an interest" (2010: 177), what appears to unite users of these different websites is their shared interest in foreign songs, which shapes their similar identities as music fans. It seems reasonable to argue that any music fan with computer literacy and Internet access can make one's own translations of foreign

songs and share them with others. But this is not the case in reality. In order to better understand the correlation between production, dissemination and circulation of amateur song translation, Bourdieu's core concepts will be applied to my analysis in the following section.

### 5.5.1 Entry to the Field

Any online community can be regarded as a social space with its own internal structure where participants relate to each other in various ways, although this may differ from how people communicate in the real world. From this perspective, the amateur song translation activity online (as a whole) can be conceptualized as a single field, which is further constituted by a group of subfields. By 'subfields', I want to highlight the coexistence of different types of amateur engagement as previously discussed. Different music fans choose to join different networks in relation to song translation, i.e. some choose lyrics translation whilst some others opt for MV subtitling.

Furthermore, one key dimension of Bourdieu's notion of field is its relative autonomy (1993). According to him, any field is relatively autonomously organized with its own dynamics, but also subject to external influence from interrelated fields. Hence, it has to be noted that the field of amateur song translation does not happen in a vacuum. If we look back at the history of China's song translation activities, access to foreign songs was limited and the dissemination was largely controlled before mid-1980s, when the government or publishers commissioned professionals to translate foreign songs (Xue 2002). Such 'patronage', using Lefevre's words (1992), has gradually dwindled, which results in few professional-led and institution-sponsored song translation activities. However, Chinese people's access to foreign cultural products has been facilitated significantly by technological advances, leaving a gap between the supply and needs of song translations. This gives amateurs an opportunity to enter the field of song translation, which can be explained by the

notion of habitus.

Habitus can be individual and collective and tends to be homogeneous within the same social group or class. In the present research, this might account for the fact that most agents in the field of amateur song translation are young people who have developed similar habits due to listening to foreign songs and following comparable consumption patterns.

To be more specific, according to the CNNIC 34<sup>th</sup> Statistical Report, two groups (the 10-19 age band and the 20-29 age band) accounted for 24.5% and 30.7% of total domestic internet users respectively in China by June 2014.<sup>138</sup> In terms of occupation, students constitute the largest body of China's Internet users. These figures clearly demonstrate that young people are generally more computer literate than previous generations. This can be attributed to the fact that they have grown up in the Internet era. In a similar vein, they also tend to have a greater interest in foreign pop music, which is playing a more ubiquitous role in their life. As can be seen from amateurs' self-descriptions about song translation in the preceding section, most of them acknowledge the essential role of translation in understanding foreign songs and are willing to translate lyrics for free. With such a "feel for the game" citing Bourdieu's metaphor (1990), music fans can participate in the field of song translation.

As Bourdieu (1989: 19) suggests, "nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies". Judging from their self-descriptions and their responses to viewers' criticism of their translation errors, we can say that amateurs mark their identities as non-professionals. Their voluntary distancing from the professional translators, which constitutes part of their habitus, is heavily influenced by societal values. Most of the amateurs are likely to have a certain level of foreign language proficiency but receive little formal training in translation. As pointed out by Neather

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<sup>138</sup> The report is available at <http://www.nanjingmarketinggroup.com/blog/chinese-internet-users/cnnic-34th-statistical-report-internet-development-china> (last accessed 28 December 2015).

(2012: 258), “even those with an English Major background sometimes have difficulty in conceiving of themselves as professionally adequate when it comes to translation work.” This is because in China, a professional translator is generally perceived as someone who has received specialised training and obtained certain certification or accreditation. Moreover, real-life working experience in the translation industry with remuneration is crucial for a professional translator. This is consistent with Harris (2010) who views ‘professional translators’ as “people who do translating for a living” (as cited in Pym 2011: 89). However, nearly all the amateurs enter the field of song translation motivated by their individual interest as opposed to economic gains. Therefore, it is not surprising that these amateurs perceive themselves as non-professionals. Amateurs’ little respect for copyrights, again, proves that habitus is reflective of embodied cultural and social history. This is because illegal downloading is common in many parts of the world, including China. Consequently, most of the amateurs in question view their translating and sharing illegally sourced content as ‘normal’ and therefore it happens continuously without reflexive acknowledgement.

This shows that one’s habitus is shaped by his or her social environment. In accordance with Bourdieu, habitus generate thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions, which consequently reproduce the social structure. An individual’s habitus informs one how to ‘play the game’ (Bourdieu 1984: 330), as evidenced in that amateur translations have different characteristics and differ from those of professional translators. Amateur translators are allowed more leeway and flexibility to choose songs and manipulate the texts. Another problem influenced by habitus is the voluntary participation of the individual in that they can decide by themselves if they want to withdraw, as it usually incurs no actual penalty.

### 5.5.2 Hierarchies and Rivalries within the Field

Lyrics translation and MV subtitling by amateur translators under scrutiny

overlap with each other as the motivation underlying their emergence is the same: translating songs is worth doing for their agents. However, as can be seen from the discussion in previous sections, some subfields are relatively active while others are dormant. This results in the hierarchies and rivalries of the field of amateur translation of songs.

Notwithstanding their defined identity and similar habitus, how do we account for ongoing variation between the subfield agents? Even within the same subfield, we have already noticed that some members are more active than others. Different participation on the part of music fans is similar to what has been discussed by Burgess and Green (2009: 81) about the video sharing network YouTube as follows:

YouTube is a potential site of cosmopolitan cultural citizenship – a space in which individuals can represent their identities and perspectives, engage with self-representations of others, and encounter cultural difference. *But access to all the layers of possible participation is limited to a particular segment of the population – those with the motivations, technological competencies, and site-specific cultural capital sufficient to participate at all levels of engagement the network affords* (emphasis added).

This reveals that a certain level of competency is a prerequisite for entry to a certain field. Compared with the ease of forming a song translation group on Douban and answering questions on Baidu Knows, access to MV subtitling requires more resources. This is closely related with Bourdieu's notion of capital. As indicated earlier, capital is unequally distributed across social space, where agents compete for specific capital to defend or transform their positions. As amateurs translate songs on a voluntary basis with no payment, the field of amateur song translation is, on the whole, characterised by a low level of economic capital. Cultural capital here consists of music knowledge, familiarity with certain songs and singers, educational

qualifications, foreign languages and site-specific technical skills, etc, whereas symbolic capital has to do with prestige and reputation in the field. Social capital refers to “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1986: 248). This implies that social capital can only be accrued when one participates in a constructed social network, finds intimacy and builds relationships with other members. Although virtual at the beginning, the network can be extended further into actual life, turning itself into the real social capital of the users. As noted in the previous discussion, anonymity is common to users of all three websites, but MV subtitlers successfully extend their network beyond the virtual sphere.

For the creators of any single Douban group related with song translation, they want to use the platform for exchanging ideas and sharing translations, which, to a certain extent, embodies their desire to find a connection with others and know more about the music. In other words, this offers a way for group creators to acquire more cultural capital and social capital. It is the same with members joining the group, as the membership signifies that they identify with the music preferences and aesthetic experiences of the group. However, limited effective communication plagues Douban groups and fails to earn both the group creator and members their wanted capital, which further dampens their intention to continue using the group. In contrast, the distinctive channel of distribution on video streaming websites enables the subtitled MVs to reach comparatively more viewers and most of the contributors have their own Weibo accounts as a way to engage and manage fan peers. Some of the groups have attracted a large number of followers, as can be seen from the fact that Liu has been contacted directly by other people who want his translations. This illustrates the conversion of cultural capital to social and symbolic capital as described by Bourdieu. In turn, more capital can help the dominant hold or reinforce their existing positions. Hence, it is not difficult to understand the phenomenon that newcomers do not find it



easy to enter the field of MV subtitling, as the established subtitlers continually work hard to maintain their status quo.

The possible mutual convertibility of cultural capital into economic capital also contributes to the dynamics of Baidu Knows as a platform for song translation. According to the points reward system of the website, as for the individuals who ask questions concerning the meaning of certain foreign songs, they have to use points but the costs will be offset by the cultural capital embodied in the translation provided. Whoever contributes the translation could turn his or her cultural capital into economical capital via using the points to exchange for real goods.

Comparatively speaking, some MV fansubbers are able to accrue a high amount of symbolic capital with their cultural and social capital in the long term whilst Baidu Knows provides potential for users to gain cultural and economic capital. However, users of Douban Groups currently have little chance of securing capital. Such unequal distribution of different forms of capital may account for the sub-field differences in terms of agents' attitudes and corresponding participation, as we have seen in the decreasing participation in Douban translation groups and the rise of MV subtitling activities.

Hierarchies exist within the same online community and this is because individuals hold different volumes of capital. For example, music fans may have different levels of knowledge about the same song or the same genre. In terms of the flow of the shared information and knowledge, there are always senders and receivers. Senders acquire a high level of cultural capital; otherwise, they would not be able to send information to others. The answer providers on Baidu Knows, as a case in point, solve the question capitalising on their knowledge, although the quality is not guaranteed. As in the case of MV subtitling we have discussed previously, the knowledge of how to access original MVs, use digital editing and video making tools can be regarded as the unique cultural capital of fansubbers. In terms of the agents' participatory behaviour, highly committed members tend to enjoy a larger amount of

social capital than lurkers. As they are active within the group, it is natural for them to become the centre of peer activities. Hence, agents accrue multiple forms of capital and accordingly define their positions within the field, whether it be high or low, core or periphery.

However, the positions with the field are not static, given the competitions among the agents who choose to enter the same field. As noted earlier, it is common practice for MV subtitling groups to compete for the first to release subtitles in order to attract more viewings and new followers, which could be regarded as a form of social capital and ultimately symbolic capital. In Baidu Knows, users are also found to compete with each other in terms of providing a better answer in order to be chosen by the person who asks the question. Hence, more and more subtitling groups for foreign songs are emerging in China, but only a limited few stand out. In a similar vein, on Baidu Knows, there is only one answer chosen as the best. All these have illustrated that agents vie for the field-specific capital in order to be well-placed within the field.

As can be observed in some of the examples cited previously, several Douban group creators have cancelled their accounts. In comparison, the subtitling group 'LC & LD' has revealed to me their reluctance to give up MV subtitling as they have a strong connectedness with the network. Such a contrasting practice can be illuminated, again, by the nature of habitus as 'structuring structure'. Habitus is continuously adaptive to the external social realities. When agents occupy an advantageous position within a field, it is more likely for them to develop emotional bonds with the field and continue their contribution with better performance. Such a cyclical process can further reinforce their advantage in the field, which is like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 127). On the contrary, if the agents cannot change their disadvantaged position, lack of ease may surface, just like fish out of water.

How amateurs define what to translate and how to translate, and produce

corresponding actions, constitute the internal dynamics, which help to shape the structure of the field. However, the field of amateur song translation is closely related with the external fields of law, music industry and translation. For example, MVs, as a marketing device of promoting music, have become an important development in music industry. This has contributed to the emergence of MV fan subtitling activities. Additionally, the rules and regulations of video sharing for the sake of copyright protection exercise constraints on the fansubbers, as evidenced in Youku's removal of subtitled videos of the AMV.

Moreover, the legality of fan subtitled MVs remains problematic for the time being. As Jenkins declares, "The fans' labor in enhancing the value of an intellectual property can never be publicly recognized if the studio is going to maintain that the studio alone is the source of all value in that property" (2006: 138). Although some TV companies have started formal cooperation with film subtitling groups,<sup>139</sup> the influence of MV fansubbing groups is limited to other music fans in the field for the moment.

Amateur translation, as a relatively new phenomenon, has caught the attention of several scholars within TS. Admittedly, amateurs' translation quality needs to be improved. As Pym (2014) points out, despite the professional translator associations' doubt about the contribution of unqualified translators, voluntary translators are not without their advantages. In line with this, we can say that music fans are quicker than professional translators in perceiving what is going on in the music industry and clearer about what kinds of translation work best for their peers. In particular, against the backdrop that there are not many professionals undertaking song translations, the contribution of amateur song translators cannot be downplayed.

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<sup>139</sup> An example covered in Chinese mass media in the year of 2014 is a Korean drama fansubbing group, which subtitled the pop Korean drama *You Who Came from the Star* into Chinese with a payment of less than 8 pounds per episode. The information is available at <http://www.chinanews.com/yl/2014/03-03/5900097.shtml> (last accessed 05 December 2015).

## 5.6 Conclusion

The availability of foreign songs has been greatly improved in China thanks to technological advances and globalisation. In the meantime, an increasing number of self-organising online communities have emerged, where amateurs and fans translate songs and share with other peers. Little scholarly attention has been paid to the thriving amateur translation activities dealing with songs. Therefore, this chapter has provided a brief overview of the volunteer-based initiative of introducing and translating foreign songs in China and offered more glimpses into translation in relation to music. Two types of fan engagement, either lyrics translation or subtitling MVs, have been examined. A case study of an MV fansubbing team is further analysed. Similarities and differences between the three online communities have been examined and discussed within Bourdieu's sociological framework. Shared interests in foreign songs and the desire to understand the songs act as major incentives for most amateurs to translate songs. This is due to the fact that they have grown up with better foreign language skills<sup>140</sup> and computer literacy, as well as more access to foreign songs. However, it has been revealed that a sense of being appreciated, strong connectedness with the network or potential rewards are positively associated with the participatory behaviour of amateur translators. Comparatively speaking, Douban groups are less active due to limited communication among group members. MV fansubbing activities are on the rise thanks to the exponential development of video sharing websites and constant commitment from some passionate subtitling groups.

On the whole, amateurs act as the initiator and coordinator of their own translation process and the listeners can voice their opinions and negotiate with

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<sup>140</sup> It is worth pointing out that although the amateur groups analysed in my current thesis mainly translate and subtitle English songs, Chinese students nowadays have more opportunities to study other foreign languages other than English, such as Japanese, Korean, Spanish, French, etc. On the whole, today's generation of Chinese young people have better foreign language skills than previous generations.

amateur translators. Such mutual interaction constitutes a major difference from the past song translation activities which were dominated by the one-way flow of reception from the translators to the listeners, as in the case of Xue examined in Chapter 4 (more comparison will be done in Chapter 7). To some extent, amateur song translation is problematic in translation accuracy and copyright aspects. Nevertheless, it has a profound impact on the way how foreign songs are translated and received among Chinese audiences, in particular, as song translations undertaken by professionals are rarely available nowadays.

## Chapter 6 Case Study of Lyricist Albert Leung

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces how the Hong Kong-based lyricist Albert Leung gradually came to be acknowledged as one of the most eminent lyricists in Chinese pop music through sketching out some key stages of his career. It then analyses some works of Leung pertinent to the present study of song translation. I refer to either those Chinese songs with lyrics authored by Leung but with tunes which are coming from foreign songs, or songs with two sets of Leung's lyrics in Cantonese and Mandarin. As many of the Chinese lyrics bear little similarity with the original lyrics, the phenomenon of borrowing melodies and covering songs tends to be cast aside in many of existing studies on song translation. Admittedly, meaning is central to translation, but the same melody can possibly allow listeners to recognise the cueing and refer to the earlier version they have previously known or heard. No matter how the target lyrics relate to their original, the cover song remains undoubtedly a construct resulting from an act of interpretation during the importation and exportation of music *per se*. Hence, one aim of this chapter is to focus on cover songs as part of song translation through analysing Leung's practice and song works. Adopting a Bourdieusian approach, the chapter continues to identify the connection between Leung's individual dispositions towards writing lyrics and the social context within which he is embedded. It is hoped that using Leung's lyric writing career as a case study, this chapter can offer insights into why people choose to write new lyrics instead of directly translating the foreign lyrics.

### 6.2 Key Stages of Leung's Career as a Professional Lyricist

In January of 2005 and 2007 respectively, two albums called *Linxi zizhuan* 林夕

字传 [Autobiography of Albert Leung<sup>141</sup>] and *Linxi zizhuan er* 林夕字传 2 [Autobiography of Albert Leung, Volume 2] were released. The albums consisted of Leung's favourite lyrics selected from his own works over the past twenty years. For each song, listeners could get to know the stories behind it told by either Leung himself or Riley Lam,<sup>142</sup> as relevant information is included in the album inserts. It is not common for lyricists who usually work behind the scenes to be able to individually collaborate with different record labels, use the copyrighted songs and launch albums under their own names. This aptly illustrates the high status and respect Leung enjoys within the music industry. However, this does not mean that Leung's career as a lyricist has always been smooth, as we shall see below. As concluded by Fu (2007: 170), Leung's writing career can be mainly divided into three stages, namely, writing songs for a Hong Kong band called Raidas, cooperation with Lo Ta-yu,<sup>143</sup> and the successful rise to stardom after cooperation with different singers.

### 6.2.1 Early Years as Preparation for Entry into Writing Lyrics

Leung says on several occasions that his interest in reading classical Chinese literature, in particular, *ci* poem of Su Dongpo 苏东坡, largely inspired his choice of career as a professional lyricist.<sup>144</sup> In middle school, he began to read ancient

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<sup>141</sup> The Chinese title of the albums uses a homophone of *zi* '字' [words] and *zi* '自' [self], which, I think, tends to emphasise that all the lyrics of the songs included in the album are penned by Leung. It must be pointed out that songs in the albums are still sung by original singers rather than Leung. For more information about the two albums, visit <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1056061.htm> and <http://baike.baidu.com/view/939213.htm> (last accessed 20 August 2015).

<sup>142</sup> Taking an apprenticeship with Leung, he has been regarded as one of the most acclaimed among the younger generation of Hong Kong lyricists. In addition, his Chinese name is Lin Ruoning 林若宁.

<sup>143</sup> He is a prolific Taiwanese singer and songwriter, also known as Luo Dayou 罗大佑.

<sup>144</sup> Su Dongpo is a great poet in Chinese history. *ci*, is a form of poetry which emerged in Song Dynasty (960-1279). This information is obtained from the websites <http://ent.qq.com/a/20150115/047565.htm> and <http://v.ifeng.com/e/200808/3111530f-1f90-4864-a38a-f9b270e496df.shtml> (both last accessed 15 July 2015).

Chinese poetry and literary works, such as *A Dream of Red Mansions* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and set his mind to be a lyricist.<sup>145</sup> Driven by his fascination with words, Leung successfully gained admission to the Faculty of Arts in the University of Hong Kong in 1981 to study Chinese language and literature. During this period, with specialisation in modern Chinese poetry, Leung had the chance to read more poems and free verses by Mu Dan 穆旦 and Bei Dao 北島,<sup>146</sup> and even established a poetry journal through cooperation with other poets at the university. Based on his reading of classical Chinese poetry, Leung understood more about the rhetoric devices in writing song lyrics including the number of characters per line, the placement of rhymes, and the position of tone.<sup>147</sup> All this gave him a solid grounding from which he continued to benefit.

According to a blog post on *Punch Magazine* in 2013,<sup>148</sup> reading romance novels by Yi Shu 亦舒<sup>149</sup> and Eileen Chang 张爱玲<sup>150</sup> has been beneficial to Leung when writing love songs. As said by Leung himself, it may be unrealistic for a person to be always in a relationship and therefore love stories written by these novelists acted as a great source of inspiration to him. In addition, the two female writers' books offer detailed portraits of human life and a good reflection of individual psyches, which positively influenced Leung's worldview and creative

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<sup>145</sup> The information is available at <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1018749> (last accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>146</sup> They are two important poets in the history of modern Chinese literature.

<sup>147</sup> The aforementioned information synthesises a report of *Dongfang zaobao* 东方早报 [Oriental Morning Post] on 12 January 2012, which is available at <http://book.sohu.com/20090112/n261707043.shtml> (last accessed 2 July 2015), a blog post on <http://www.punchmagazine.hk/2013/讀詞人-林夕中大博群講座後記/> (last accessed 6 July 2015), the profile information of Leung on the website [http://book.ifeng.com/shupingzhoukan/duyao10/wendang/detail\\_2010\\_07/01/1702407\\_0.shtml](http://book.ifeng.com/shupingzhoukan/duyao10/wendang/detail_2010_07/01/1702407_0.shtml) (last accessed 6 July 2015) and an interview report in the book of Wong et al (2010:106-110).

<sup>148</sup> <http://www.punchmagazine.hk/2013/讀詞人-林夕中大博群講座後記/> (last accessed 6 July 2015).

<sup>149</sup> She, also called as Isabel Nee Yeh-su, is a popular female writer from Hong Kong.

<sup>150</sup> Also known as Zhang Ailing, she was another leading female writer in the history of modern Chinese literature.



practice.<sup>151</sup> For instance, in a TV programme, some audience members asked Leung with intrigue how many times he had gone through the experience of breaking up with a partner so that he was able to write so many touching love songs. Leung replied:

The number of times of breaking up has no direct relationship with the number of my songs. Simply in the principle of ‘common sense’, once you have experienced a heart-shattering breakup, you can make use of that feeling and extend it to other connected experiences.<sup>152</sup>

The influence of the old generation of Hong Kong lyricists such as James Wong 黄霑 and Cheng Kwok-Kong 郑国江 has played an equally important role, as Leung tried to imitate, learn and apply their lyrical techniques to his own writing at the outset.<sup>153</sup>

Following his graduation in 1984, Leung was offered a teaching post in the University of Hong Kong.<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, the desire to know more about the intricacies of the language, Leung applied for the university’s master programme in

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<sup>151</sup> The information that Leung likes reading the two female writers’ works is based on Episode 1 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung which can be accessed at <http://ent.cntv.cn/enttv/special/C23126/classpage/video/20111019/101749.shtml> and a report on Leung from *Xin shangbao* 新商报 of Dalian Press group published on 11 July 2009, which can be read at [http://szb.dlxww.com/xsb/html/2009-07/11/content\\_234305.htm](http://szb.dlxww.com/xsb/html/2009-07/11/content_234305.htm) (both last accessed 16 July 2015).

<sup>152</sup> This information was given by Leung himself in a TV show entitled *Wo ai wode zuguo* 我爱我的祖国 [I love China] by Hubei Television in 2012, available at <http://tv.sohu.com/20120528/n344215313.shtml> (last accessed 27 December 2015).

<sup>153</sup> The information is obtained from Episode 1 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung, which is available at <http://tv.cntv.cn/video/C23176/4c6652da5bfd4cea996e2c88c67f551e> (last accessed 18 September 2014).

<sup>154</sup> This is based on the information given in Episode 2 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung. It is available at <http://ent.cntv.cn/enttv/special/C23126/classpage/video/20111018/101455.shtml> (last accessed 20 September 2014).

translation. It is important to note, however, he did not get his master degree in the end as he did not write his dissertation. The reason, according to him, was that he realised that the career prospects after obtaining the master degree in TS did not suit him.<sup>155</sup>

Leung continued with writing lyrics while teaching. At that time, there existed no such specialised profession as lyricists or similar job vacancies in music companies. In order to have access to more opportunities, Leung was very keen on entering songwriting competitions over the next few years, big or small.<sup>156</sup>

According to Episode 2 of the CCTV Music documentary,<sup>157</sup> years of preparation finally paid off when Leung won the first place of the Songwriting Contest by the Radio Television Hong Kong (a local public service broadcaster, hereinafter referred to as RTHK) in 1986 with the song *Cengjing* 曾经 [Once Upon a Time] for singer Kenny Bee 钟镇涛, which signified his formal entry into the field of music industry. However, after this, Leung was still not highly regarded in the music community and had to wait for a long time for invitations to write lyrics. As Leung recalled in the interview,<sup>158</sup> “I wrote 7 songs in 1986, 13 in 1987 and the number of songs rose to 50 in 1988. This means that at the very beginning, I basically got one commission in about two months and the process of waiting was too miserable and frustrating [...]”.

In 1987, the song *Xiyan de niren* 吸烟的女人 [The Smoking Woman] won Leung second place in another pop songwriting contest run by the Asia-Pacific

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<sup>155</sup> This can be seen in an interview Leung had with *Beijing Youth Daily* in the beginning of 2009, a newspaper based in Beijing at <http://bjyouth.yynet.com/3.1/0901/13/3261065.html> [last accessed 20 September 2014]. The original web page is currently inaccessible, see instead <http://blog.renren.com/share/254884877/12951243180> or <http://www.23yy.com/2200000/2193673.shtml> (last accessed 27 July 2015).

<sup>156</sup> Information is given in Episode 2 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung, which can be accessed at <http://ent.cntv.cn/entv/special/C23126/classpage/video/20111018/101455.shtml> (last accessed 20 September 2014).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

Broadcasting Union. After being aired on radios, the song became an immediate hit. The song's popularity brought Leung to the limelight, but at the same time, Leung faced criticism for writing the lyrical content in a too obscure and illogical manner. With regards to the negative reviews of the song given by the media, Leung responded that:

Because of the writing technique, the lyrics do resemble an obscure poem. At that time, I believed that being creative and novel was the ultimate goal but nowadays I would say that to experiment with a creative approach needs to be done on a reasonable basis. This is not a matter of creativity for creativity's sake.<sup>159</sup>

Thereafter, Leung adjusted his writing approach and successively wrote *Chuanshuo* 传说 [Legend] (1987) and *Bieren de ge* 别人的歌 [Others' Songs] (1987) for the band Raidas, both of which were successful in terms of topping music charts and receiving music awards. These early successes gave Leung a solid grounding in his career, which gradually earned him more opportunities.<sup>160</sup>

### 6.2.2 Cooperation with Lo Ta-yu

In 1987, Leung gave up his job as a teaching assistant and began working as a newspaper editor. However, not used to pushing journalists and contributors to meet their submission deadlines, Leung changed his mind once again. Subsequently, Leung moved to Asia Television Limited (a leading television broadcaster in Hong Kong) as Creative Director, taking charge of its programme management, but only to realise that this job demanded far more than creativity. The physical exhaustion

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

involved in the work of event coordination and execution was too overwhelming for him. As a result, Leung decided to be a freelance lyricist so that he could focus on what matters most to him, namely, writing lyrics. It is during this time, Leung began to cooperate with some top singers in Hong Kong such as Anita Mui 梅艳芳, Roman Tam 罗文 and Leslie Cheung 张国荣, further paving his way to the mainstream music industry.<sup>161</sup>

According to He (2012: 16-17), the early 1990s witnessed the music career peak of Jacky Cheung 张学友, Andy Lau 刘德华, Aaron Kwok 郭富城 and Leon Lai Ming 黎明. The four have been called 'Four Heavenly Kings' as their music dominated throughout Hong Kong and the Chinese-speaking world. Leung was commissioned to write songs for them, in particular love-themed lyrics to be set with the melodies of songs in foreign languages. However, Leung was not satisfied with such a strong emphasis on love and wanted to expand the breadth of his lyrical content. Coincidentally, Lo Ta-yu came to Hong Kong for expansive development and set up Music Factory Record Company in 1988. As reported in Episode 1 of the CCTV Music's documentary,<sup>162</sup> after Leung wrote the lyrics for Lo's composed melody, which later became the song *Sishi guren lai*, the two hit it off immediately. In 1991, Leung was invited by Lo to be the General Manager of the record company, which opened a new chapter to Leung's writing career. In Leung's own words, his cooperation with the Taiwanese singer was a turning point' as Lo was bold in writing songs at that time, giving him much leeway in writing whatever he wanted. In the Music Factory, Leung had worked in positions related with planning, publicity and marketing, human resources management and even studio recording. In this way, he quickly familiarised himself with the pop music production mechanism and deepened his understanding of lyric writing, as evidenced in his own words:

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<sup>161</sup> The information in this paragraph is presented in Episode 5 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRmfFdxEvYQ> (last accessed 26 September 2015).

<sup>162</sup> It is available at <http://tv.cntv.cn/video/C23176/4c6652da5bfd4cea996e2c88c67f551e> (last accessed 18 September 2015).

In the past, I always believed that lyrics could be appreciated on their own and therefore people could simply enjoy them through reading. However, it was not until in the recording studio that I truly realised that lyrics needed to be sung properly to be fully functional. And when the lyrics are being sung, one is more likely to experience those technical problems of lyric writing.<sup>163</sup>

The need of matching his lyrics with the music also prompted him to learn musical notation himself. According to Leung, he would keep listening to one of his favourite songs for hundreds of times until he got a sense of how the music was organised, such as harmony, melody and rhythm. After years of practice, Leung finally found it easy to read music.<sup>164</sup> Backed by the support of Lo and the record label, Leung was not restrained anymore by the bulk of commissions for love songs on break-up or unrequited love. The two like-minded individuals departed from traditional norms and released several unconventional songs, among which the most well-known is *Huanghou dadao dong* 皇后大道东 [Queen's Road East] (1991). According to He (2012: 18-22), the song is particular not only because of its background as it was written with a strong pre-1997 emotion amid Hong Kong's return to mainland China but also, it is a rare song through whose lyrics Leung expressed his views on politics. Nowadays it is more common for Leung to share his ideas on current issues and politics in newspaper columns.

Although Music Factory was closed down ultimately, the experience gave Leung a good understanding of the workflows and various tasks involved in making songs. More importantly, as said by Leung, collaboration with Lo provided him opportunities to exchange ideas with people working within Taiwanese music

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<sup>163</sup> The information is obtained from Episode 4 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bLuqeW5H24> (last accessed 23 September 2014).

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

industry and to start learning Mandarin. This greatly helped him to write Mandarin songs later.<sup>165</sup>

### 6.2.3 A Gradual Rise to Stardom

In the year of 1994, Leung left Music Factory which was closing down and started working in Commercial Radio Hong Kong with responsibilities including creative advertising management and programme production. As Leung recounted, his job in the Radio involved thinking of proper slogans to hook listeners and make them remember the programme, which was a positive influence on him in writing lyrics. This was because he needed to find a way of saying the maximum in the fewest possible words, while the same could be said for writing the chorus with repetitive lyrics, which sum up the heart of a song.<sup>166</sup> Besides, Leung even changed his reading habits due to the mass-oriented nature of the radio station. In Leung's own words, "all the radio programmes are designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of people, which means I should not limit myself to reading purely literary works. Hence, I try to absorb as much as I can from different genres of books, such as economics, politics, philosophy and social science".<sup>167</sup>

He (2012: 21-22) states that Leung started writing songs for the younger generation of Cantopop singers, such as Eason Chan 陈奕迅 and Miriam Yeung 杨千嬅 from the mid-1990s.<sup>168</sup> Since the two singers signed contracts with record companies and released their first albums, they have maintained their cooperation with Leung.

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<sup>165</sup> The information can be found in *Linxi zizhuan er*, which is available at <http://baike.baidu.com/view/939213.htm> (last accessed 25 July 2015).

<sup>166</sup> The information is obtained from Episode 6 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9Uox6vpOWc> (last accessed 23 September 2014).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Chan and Yeung won the first and third place respectively in the 1995 New Talent Singing Awards Competition organised by Hong Kong Television Broadcasts Limited.

The late-90s gradually witnessed the peak of Leung's career, when most songs he wrote for Hong Kong singers such as Leslie Cheung and Leo Ku 古巨基 became massive successes, among which Leung is best known for his collaboration with Faye Wong (He *ibid.*). As mentioned by Leung, Wong has a very versatile voice and can sing each song well, regardless of its musical style. More importantly, Wong is apparently willing to accept any songs written by him. Such good chemistry and mutual trust enabled Leung to experiment with different styles of lyrics on Wong, including writing in the form of new Chinese poetry (Huang et al. 2010: 115).

Against a backdrop when the old generation of Cantonese pop lyricists gradually retired or passed away in the early 2000s, Leung wrote lyrics for 1180 songs for over a hundred of singers (He *ibid.*: 43). Leung thus stood out as the unparalleled lyrics master in Hong Kong music scene. Another notable feature of Leung's practice of writing lyrics is that after the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, it is increasingly common for him to write Mandarin songs, extending his influence to the Mandopop scene. We shall come back to this issue in more detail in Section 6.4.1.

Leung's lyrical prowess has not only gained him many opportunities but also multiple awards. For example, some movie theme songs written by him such as *Zhongshen meili* 终身美丽 [Being Beautiful All the Time] (2001) and *Wujiandao* 无间道 [Infernal Affairs] (2002), successively won the award of Best Original Film Song in the Hong Kong Film Awards.<sup>169</sup> With the song *Lian* 脸 [Face] (1998) and *Wo zui qin'ai de* 我最亲爱的 [My Beloved] (2011), Leung won the title of Best Lyricist in 1999 and 2010 respectively at Taiwan's annual Golden Melody Awards.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> It is an annual award ceremony organized by the Hong Kong Film Awards Association with the aim of recognising the best work from the local film industry.

<sup>170</sup> More information about the awards Leung has won is available at <http://baike.baidu.com/subview/16457/5419482.htm> and [https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/最佳作詞人獎\\_\(金曲獎\)](https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/最佳作詞人獎_(金曲獎)) (last accessed 11 November 2015).

According to He (2012: 6), on 18 January 2009, Leung was presented with the Golden Needle Award in the 31st annual Top 10 Gold Songs Awards sponsored by RTHK. The Golden Needle Award, which was started in the year of 1981 representing the highest level of honour in Cantonese pop music scene, undoubtedly symbolises Leung's life achievement and contribution to the local music industry. Regarding Leung's win, Feng Lici 冯礼慈, a renowned Hong Kong music critic, commented: "In one or two hundred years, if something needs to represent Hong Kong's literary creation for the current era, it will be Leung's lyrics" (He *ibid.*: 8).

The massive popularity of Leung's lyrics is also evidenced by the online forums and fan clubs spontaneously established and organized by people who love Leung's lyrics and books.<sup>171</sup> Listeners have responded to Leung's songs with great enthusiasm. For example, there are long paragraphs of reviews on Leung's lyrics written by different fans sharing their interpretations. Others tend to analyse his lyrics sentence by sentence as if they were reading ancient Chinese poems.

Considering the above, no one can deny that Leung is an influential figure in today's Chinese pop music scene, whose lyrics are well received by music critics and listeners. It is obvious that the remarkable literary exquisiteness in Leung's lyrics is inseparable from his sustained interest in reading and years of practice in writing.

### 6.3 Behind the Lyrics: Leung's Writing Workflow

As said in Episode 6 of the CCTV Music's documentary,<sup>172</sup> Leung's lyrics have stricken a good balance between quality and quantity. It is no secret that the shortest time for Leung to finish a whole song is forty-five minutes, which is Mavis Hee's 许美静 *Mingzhi gufan* 明知故犯 [Deliberate Violation] (1997) while it could

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<sup>171</sup> Two examples are the websites <http://www.douban.com/group/xinyoulinxi/> and <http://cantonpopblog.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/林夕> (both last accessed 11 November 2014).

<sup>172</sup> The full episode can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9Uox6vpOWc> (last accessed 23 September 2014).



take him several days for some other songs, such as Eason Chan's *Shall We Talk*<sup>173</sup> (2001). In this section, I will take a look at some of Leung's ideas about writing lyrics and the way he blends lyrics and melodies.

In response to the question whether singers have to meet specific requirements in order to sing his lyrics, Leung explained:

Anyone can ask me to write lyrics if they want. Some new singers may not be famous initially but there are chances that they can be tomorrow's superstars. You simply don't know. Take Faye Wong for example; when I wrote lyrics for her first lead single more than ten years ago, she had no fame at all. So in reality, whoever invites me for lyrics, I will try my utmost. This is because I cannot guarantee that the person I am refusing now would not be able to become tomorrow's Faye Wong. However, if the singing is too bad, maybe there will be no second chance for our cooperation.<sup>174</sup>

Not only does Leung write songs for both famous and lesser-known singers, but he also writes all kinds of different songs. According to He (2012: 245), although the topic may fail to arouse his interest, Leung spares no effort to meet singers' demands if they wish to have songs on a specific topic. For example, when writing songs for the album *Games* (2003) of singer Leo Ku, Leung spent days playing computer games to try to gain a feel. While preparing for one album themed on Japanese anime, Leung bought a series of Japanese Manga and kept reading them for months. The singer recalled that during that period, when he visited Leung, he found Leung's room was heavily packed with Manga books (He *ibid.*). From this perspective, we can see that Leung keeps exploring ways of improving his writing to cater to singers'

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<sup>173</sup> It has to be mentioned that in spite of its English title (which is also the hook), the song is in Cantonese.

<sup>174</sup> The information was given by Leung when he was invited to give a talk about his ideas about lyrics writing by Suzhou Music Radio in 2012, which is available at [http://v.pps.tv/play\\_3AJ65J.html](http://v.pps.tv/play_3AJ65J.html) (last accessed 10 August 2014).

demands.

It is a common practice for the composer to write the music first and the lyricist to add words accordingly afterwards. Leung is no exception, as he habitually writes lyrics to the ready-made melodies; in his own words “I need melody first to provoke my creativity”.<sup>175</sup>

As reported by *Southern Weekly* in 2013,<sup>176</sup> before putting any words down on paper, Leung tends to choose a good title for the song in the first place. Leung told the newspaper that:

As a lyricist, I have a large collection of back-up song titles, which include book names, movie titles and person names for reference and future use. In particular, there is a special section dedicated to phrases and sentences which I have drawn from the novels by Louis Cha Leung-yung.<sup>177</sup> I also pick song titles or gain inspiration from book titles of Yi Shu, and various famous quotes compiled by Baidu users.

Another important dimension of Leung’s writing is to set the tone for the song. One essential rule for lyricists is to write lyrics which match the melody given by the composer. At the same interview with *Southern Weekly*, Leung revealed that he had been mistaken to be pessimistic in the past as his lyrics always evoked sadness among listeners. However, this was due to the fact that the tune always came first and the given melodies were slow rather than upbeat. The melodic structure and the

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<sup>175</sup> This information is obtained from Episode 1 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung, which is available at <http://my.tv.sohu.com/us/17916778/12437585.shtml> (last accessed 2 September 2014).

<sup>176</sup> *Southern Weekly*, also called *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方周末 in Chinese, is a weekly newspaper based in Guangzhou, China. The report is available at <http://music.cntv.cn/2013/09/25/ARTI1380075876297222.shtml> (last accessed 30 June 2015).

<sup>177</sup> Louis Cha is a renowned Hong Kong novelist, better known by his pen name Jin Yong 金庸. Cha’s literary works, largely themed on martial arts, chivalry and patriotism, are enormously popular in and beyond China.

emotional feel of the melody influenced him in setting the mood of the lyrics. “Just use the song *Yisi bugua* 一丝不挂 [No More Concerns] (2010) for example, imagine, if I wrote lyrics full of energy and positivity to go with such a melancholy tune, wouldn’t you think it weird?” Leung’s words simply supported the idea that the lyrics should fit the music.

Likewise, Leung mentioned that some listeners complained that his lyrics were sometimes too long.<sup>178</sup> Regarding this, Leung expressed his helplessness again as he was assigned with the task of writing words to long musical phrases, which made it impossible to be dense in ideas. Further, Leung drew an analogy between lyrics writing and house building, in that the house builder needs to adjust the design, layout and actual building process based on the size of a plot of land; lyricists have to make every effort to fill the space of the melody period appropriately. In particular, according to Leung, Christopher Cha 泽日生, a composer with whom he has co-written many successful songs, prefers writing lengthy melodic structures. Under these circumstances, Leung had no choice but to detail the song’s plots with descriptive images to match the existing melody.

Xing and Wang (2008) state that the singer’s style is another element Leung takes into consideration when writing, as the unique personality of singers functions as a crucial resource of inspiration for Leung. Regarding this, Chien-Ning Chen 陈建宁, a Taiwanese record producer and songwriter, commented that:

Generally speaking, a lyricist may specialise in a certain musical form, but Leung can write different styles of lyrics when cooperating with different singers. He is so versatile that he can identify the distinct artistic persona of different singers and write lyrics suitable for them. Hence, we might see his lyrics for Eason Chan, A Mei 张惠妹 and Sandy Lam 林忆莲 differ from each other,

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<sup>178</sup> This information was revealed by Leung when he was invited to talk about his ideas about lyrics writing by Suzhou Music Radio in 2012, [http://v.pps.tv/play\\_3AJ65J.html](http://v.pps.tv/play_3AJ65J.html) (last accessed 10 August 2014).

which is not an easy job.<sup>179</sup>

When asked about the importance of lyrics in a song, Leung replied that constrained by the pre-existing melody, he already lacked full control of what to write.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, given the market needs of the music industry, it was always the music producer, the project manager and the marketing team that had the final say in how to make a song. According to Leung, on some occasions, when he was given a piece of music, the marketing team had already decided the mood, the theme and even some plots for him to write on.<sup>181</sup> This aptly illustrates the point that the marketability or the economic field functions as a ‘field of power’, as mentioned in Section 2.5.2.

Despite his fame, Leung’s songs still get rejected sometimes and therefore, he has to make compromises. In the TV programme, Leung cited the example of writing songs for the Taiwanese singer A Mei’s new album in 2011. It was agreed in the beginning that Leung would contribute 5 songs to the singer’s album but it turned out Leung wrote over 20 songs, simply because he had to rewrite each song four times so as to satisfy the requirements of the singer and the record producer.<sup>182</sup>

From what has been discussed above, Leung is not totally independent of external factors in his writing. He has to conform to the demands of singers, composers and music producers in terms of what to write.

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<sup>179</sup> This information is given by Chen in an interview shown on Episode 10 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung, which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkB2dF-VZM> (last accessed 24 September 2014).

<sup>180</sup> The answer was given by Leung when he was invited to talk about his ideas about lyrics writing by Suzhou Music Radio in 2012, [http://v.pps.tv/play\\_3AJ65J.html](http://v.pps.tv/play_3AJ65J.html) (last accessed 10 August 2014).

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> This can be retrieved from the TV show <http://tv.sohu.com/20120528/n344215313.shtml> (last accessed 16 July 2014).

## 6.4 Analysis of Leung's Lyric Writing in Relation to Cover Songs

Having presented an overview of Leung's career as a professional lyricist and writing process in preceding sections, this section focuses on Leung's practice of rewriting lyrics for the production of cover songs. As indicated earlier, cover songs fail to be acknowledged as translation by some scholars (Low 2005; Xue 2002). This chapter thus attempts to study this neglected practice and draw some parallels (if there are any) between the ways foreign songs are processed by Leung, Xue and amateurs as we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5. Below I explore first the bigger market environment which has spurred the commercial exploitation of the melody and further the production of cover songs.

### 6.4.1 Hybridity of Cantopop and the Rise of Mandarin in Cantopop Industry

As suggested by Yau (2012), composing lyrics anew to match foreign music is a normal way of music production in Hong Kong. One main reason for Hong Kong music industry to cover foreign songs lies in that it hopes to utilise the popularity of the foreign hits and replicate their success locally (Yau *ibid.*; Chu & Leung 2013). What's more, a great number of Cantopop singers made their debut at the same time in the early 1970s, which led to a booming music industry with a rather limited number of local composers and consequently an insufficient supply of originally-made melodies. To meet up with the demand, as a short-cut, Hong Kong music industry turned to foreign melodies and used them as a basis for producing songs to be released locally. Yau (*ibid.*) elucidates that as Japanese record companies asked for fewer royalties than western ones, the melodies of Japanese songs were much favoured by the Cantopop industry. However, the momentum of covering Japanese songs in Hong Kong decreased since mid-1990s. This, as Yau (*ibid.*) explains, is because the positive reception of the cover versions, particularly in the second half of the 1980s, greatly enhanced the popularity of the original Japanese singers, who were able to successfully make Hong Kong as a leg of their concert tour.

The performances brought the Hong Kong fans a chance to directly enjoy the original Japanese singing with more authentic flavour. In the meantime, because of the geographic closeness between China and South Korea, an increasing number of Korean pop songs gained immense popularity across Asia, diminishing Japan's dominance in the region's pop culture scene (Shim 2006: 5). Against this backdrop, Korean music has become another alternative resource for enriching Cantopop repertoire.

As implied earlier, Cantopop had its glory in the 1980s. However, with the globalisation of Chinese music culture, Cantopop has gradually given way to the music performed in Mandarin in terms of sales and the number of stars in the 2000s (Chow & Kloet 2013: 104). This can be explained by the fact that after Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, Mandarin became increasingly important, which, to some extent, weakened the influence of Cantonese. From a practical point of view, for most singers, Hong Kong has only a market of 7 million people. In comparison, Mandarin songs and albums can access not only the market of mainland China with a population of 1.3 billion people, but also Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia where Mandarin is widely spoken. Hence, an increasing number of singers have started learning Mandarin and releasing singles or albums in the language.

Accordingly, as an esteemed lyricist, it is not surprising for Leung to shift his emphasis towards writing Mandarin lyrics upon request. In Leung's own words, "being a lyricist is subordinate, as we write lyrics at the commission of singers or music companies. When it comes to the question whether the lyrics are good, it is not me that has the final say".<sup>183</sup> Regarding Leung's practice of writing Mandarin songs for Hong Kong singers, He (2012: 175) argues that the marketing strategy of the music companies such as Emperor Entertainment Group (EEG), one of Hong Kong's largest entertainment companies, is smart, as using the same melody with different words in Cantonese and Mandarin is cost-effective compared to producing two

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<sup>183</sup> This is retrieved from the TV show <http://tv.sohu.com/20120528/n344215313.shtml> (last accessed 16 July 2014).

entirely different songs. Moreover, the popularity of Cantonese versions within and beyond Hong Kong often paves the way for the success of the Mandarin version. In the next section, I intend to analyse some song examples which have the same melody, through which I hope to unravel the relationship between Leung's lyrics and other songs.

#### 6.4.2 Experiencing the Unfamiliarity in the Familiar: Cover Versions of Foreign Songs

As mentioned in Section 3.3.3, the reason why Leung is chosen as a case study lies in his involvement in producing cover songs using foreign melodies and writing lyrics in both Cantonese and Mandarin to the same melody. In this section, I start by examining the cover versions of foreign songs written by Leung. The first example is the English song, *Hate That I love You* (2007),<sup>184</sup> a duet between Barbadian singer Rihanna and Ne-Yo, an American singer and songwriter, which has been included in Rihanna's third album *Good Girl Gone Bad*. The song mainly depicts that when we are in love with someone, even if the person keeps hurting us, we do not care about the negative and still love him or her. In 2008, the song was covered in both Cantonese and Mandarin by Hins Cheung 张敬轩,<sup>185</sup> a Chinese pop singer pursuing his singing career in Hong Kong. Rihanna's original vocals remain unchanged, but Ne-yo's vocals are replaced with Cheung's, making the cover songs new duets. In other words, there is continuous code-switching between English and Cantonese/Mandarin. Both Cantonese and Mandarin lyrics have been written by Leung. It is worth mentioning that Rihanna and Cheung are Universal Music label-mates, which means there is no copyright infringement. The two cover songs were not only included in Cheung's album *Urban Emotions* released in 2008 but also in the Hong

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<sup>184</sup> The official video of the song is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMOOr7GEk8> (last accessed 26 January 2016).

<sup>185</sup> One can listen to the cover songs at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcdgFapzul0> (Cantonese) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL0-zCbyCzk> (Mandarin) (both last accessed 26 July 2015).

Kong Version of Rihanna’s reissued album *Good Girl Gone Bad: Reloaded* (2008).<sup>186</sup>

As told by Cheung to *Xinkuai bao* 新快报 [Xinkuai Newspaper],<sup>187</sup> “I have cooperated with Secret Garden before. Working together with international artists, though not through face-to-face cooperation, is a good experience. I feel honoured to work with Rihanna. The first time I heard *Hate That I Love You*, I immediately fell in love with the melody”. Viewed from this point, the cover songs can be said to be a result of the music company’s marketing strategy to broaden the appeal of the music as well as the cooperation between singers. Table 6.1 provides a comparison of the lyrics of the three songs.

Table 6.1 Lyrics of *Hate That I Love You*, Its Cantonese and Mandarin Covers

English Lyrics	Cantonese Lyrics	Mandarin Lyrics
Rihanna’s part: That’s how much I love you; That’s how much I need you; And I can’t stand you; Must everything you do make me wanna smile; Can I not like you for a while? (No)	The Same	The Same
Ne-Yo’s part:	Cheung’s part:	

<sup>186</sup> Relevant information is obtained from <http://www.yesasia.com/global/good-girl-gone-bad-reloaded-hong-kong-version/1011082744-0-0-0-0-e/info.html> (last accessed 26 July 2015).

<sup>187</sup> The report on 11 July 2008 is available at <http://www.chinanews.com/yl/vtcf/news/2008/07-11/1309759.shtml> (last accessed 27 July 2015).



But you won't let me	为我设想 [If you were nice to me]	我也失望 [I am disappointed, too]
You upset me, girl	别叫我欢畅 [then please stay away from me instead of giving me a fantasy]	相处那么长 [We've been together for so long]
And then you <u>kiss</u> my lips	可惜 <u>亲吻</u> 你 [But <u>kissing</u> you]	相好那么短 [but with so few harmonious days]
All of a sudden I forget (that I was upset)	<u>忘掉</u> 在温馨中带凉 (视 你如偶像) [makes me <u>forget</u> your cold heart beneath the warmth] (I adore you)	总是在 <u>亲吻</u> 中 <u>善忘</u> (讨 厌那快感) [I tend to become <u>forgetful</u> while <u>kissing</u> ] (I hate that pleasant sensation)
<u>Can't remember</u> what you did	<u>忘掉</u> 这么想最伤 [ <u>Forgetting</u> the reality that you are toying with me hurts the most]	把错误都给 <u>遗忘</u> [thus <u>forgetting</u> all the mistakes]
But I hate it	( <u>But I hate it</u> )	( <u>But I hate it</u> )
Rihanna's part: You know exactly what to do; So that I can't stay mad at you; For too long, that's wrong;	The Same	The Same
Ne-Yo's part:	Cheung's part:	

<u>But I hate it</u>	<u>But I hate it</u>	<u>But I hate it</u>
You know exactly how to touch	事实是你一刻技痒 [Because of your impulsion]	你的指尖 <u>擦过</u> 脸庞 [Your fingertips <u>graze</u> my face]
So that I don't want to <u>fuss and fight</u> no more	便自动勾起我幻想 消失 智商 [I develop an illusion of love and become a fool for you]	就忘了 <u>争吵</u> 的损伤 就像 矛盾 [as if forgetting the hurts caused by <u>quarrels</u> , as if the conflicts]
Said I despise that I adore you	自问我讨厌这份遐想 [I know I hate this fantasy]	都与我们的未来无关 [had nothing to do with our future]

As shown in Table 6.1, I have underlined the fragments with similar meaning (their English back-translations have been underlined) and the same line “But I hate it”. It appears that the English lyrics have differed considerably from both Cantonese and Mandarin lyrics, although the Mandarin lyrics contain slightly more similar words. As the Cantonese and Mandarin versions are simultaneously released as separate entities targeting different markets, this strikes me as interesting to know whether Leung had the Cantonese song in mind when writing Mandarin lyrics (or the other way round). In particular, both the Cantonese word *huanchang* 欢畅 [fantasy] and Mandarin word *kuaigan* 快感 [pleasant sensation] represent the paradoxical feeling of someone who is happy but simultaneously troubled. Due to the unconscious and corporeal nature of Leung’s habitus, there is no clear information about whether Leung repeated what he had already written in Cantonese as a result of drawing inspiration from his earlier work. The question of whether the first version and second version have cross-fertilised each other thus remains elusive. Hence, we may change perspective and look into opinions of the listeners towards

the three songs.<sup>188</sup> Their attitudes may offer us some insight into the impacts of Leung's songs.

- a. I find the canto version is better because Cantonese (in general) sounds more rigid and stronger than Mandarin. Mandarin is more soft and fluid (I'm talking about the pronunciation and stuff). English Version >= Canto version > Mandarin Version.<sup>189</sup>
- b. I personally, LOVE Hins Cheung, hence looking for his songs, but this song (Mandarin) really wasn't as good as I expected it to be. In my opinion, it's not that much to do with the language, but the style of Hins' voice, because it's so soft, it doesn't seem to fit with the original style of the song, and people (myself included) criticize too, because it doesn't sound right because it's not the original.<sup>190</sup>
- c. It's obvious that Ne-Yo's version is far more better than Hins. Whatever skills, emotions or the cooperation of NeYo and Rihanna. This version seems that it just removed the NeYo part and drove in the voice of Hins so that the version has no sparkle on it. And I'm thinking that both the Cantonese and the Mandarin version can be far more better.<sup>191</sup>
- d. I listen to Canto AND English and I love both versions. I wouldn't say this is better and he definitely hasn't ruined it but I love it just as much as the original. this song is awesome in any language!!<sup>192</sup>
- e. It's nice :) good song! merged together, blended in so well.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> It is worth mentioning that here all the comments from the websites are originally in English and copied as they are, without corrections.

<sup>189</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL0-zCbyCzk> (last accessed 27 July 2015).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTxKSloshP8> (last accessed 27 July 2015).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

The comments show that listeners tend to like what they know when comparing different songs, similar to the way one compares and evaluates the TT against the ST. Most listeners are not concerned with the textual qualities of the songs. There is even no mention of Leung, who writes the lyrics of the songs. This again highlights the anonymity of the lyricists in comparison to the prominence of the performer (as discussed in Section 2.5.2).

Let us consider another song, *Budebu ai* 不得不爱 [I Can't Help but Love You] (2005) by Taiwanese singer Wilber Pan, a cover version of the Korean song *Please Tell Me Why* (2004)<sup>194</sup> by a South Korean hip-hop group FreeStyle.

Table 6.2 Lyrics of *Please Tell Me Why* and *Budebu ai*

Korean Lyrics	Chinese Lyrics
(Female part) <sup>195</sup> My baby, <u>love</u> you so much	天天都需要你 <u>爱</u> [I need your <u>love</u> every day]
forever you and I	我的心思由你猜 [Can't you read my mind?]
<u>I love you</u>	<u>I love you</u>
Oh, I love you so much	我就是要你 [I just want you]
Forever you and I ...	让我每天都精彩 [to make my life splendid]
My baby, love you so much	天天把它挂嘴边 [We keep asking all the time]
forever you and I	到底什么是真爱 [what is true love]

<sup>194</sup> The original title of the Korean song is in English. To listen to the whole song, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tqbg2vfiOE> (last accessed 24 June 2015).

<sup>195</sup> The opening lines of the song (the female part) are originally written in English. It has to be pointed out that with Table 6.2, except for the information within the square brackets (my translations of the lyrics); other English words and phrases are originally from the songs.

<u>I love you</u>	<u>I love you</u>
Oh, I love you so much	到底有几分 [How much I love you]
Forever you and I	说得比想像更快 [I can answer it without thinking]
(Male part) 지나간시간들을모두다되돌릴순없겠죠 [The past cannot be regained]	是我们感情丰富太慷慨 [Are we too emotionally generous?]
하나둘쌓여가는걱정도모두내탓이겠지 [I am to blame for all the accumulated worries]	还是要上天安排 [or just let God decide]
하루가지나가고이틀 아무의미가 없어 [Days have passed, so meaningless]	是我们本来就是那一派 [Are we born emotionally indulgent?]
너없는이순간이내게는아무느낌도 없어 [Everything means nothing without you]	还是舍不得太乖 [or we are just willfully rebellious]
<b>Chorus:</b> Tell me, please tell me why [...]	Baby,不得不爱,否则快乐从何而来 [Baby, I can't help but love you, that's where my happiness lies.] [...]

The Korean and Chinese songs share similar structure in their performance, as the opening lines in both songs are sung by a wispy and crystal-clear female voice, followed by the male singer's part, which then proceeds to the chorus.<sup>196</sup> "I love

<sup>196</sup> It has to be mentioned that the chorus part of the Korean song involves no female singing, while in the Chinese song, the male and female singer sings each line of the chorus in succession. I guess this is because in the story depicted by the Korean lyrical content, the girl has left the protagonist. They

you”, a frequently heard English sentence, has been maintained in the same place in the Chinese song. Both songs consist of a portion of rap verses. The titles *Please Tell Me Why* and *Budebu ai* are repeated throughout each song, which constitutes the hook respectively. It is worth mentioning that the ending part of the Korean song’s title sounds like that of *Budebu ai*, as the English word ‘why’ and Chinese character *ai* ‘爱’ [love] share the same rhyme-scheme ‘-ai’. From this perspective, Leung’s lyrics have mimicked the Korean song in terms of layout.

In Table 6.2, I have translated the literal meaning of Korean and Chinese lyrics into an intermediate language, English. It can be argued that the Korean song illustrates one’s feelings such as regret, sadness, and despair after a breakup. The protagonist mourns his loss and hopes that the girl can give their relationship one more chance. In comparison, there have been considerable changes in terms of details in the Chinese song, but its main theme is still love. Specifically speaking, the Chinese song wants to convey the message that although one may experience quarrels, silent treatment or discomfort in a relationship, love can add more joy and meaning to one’s life. It can be said that both Korean and Chinese words emphasize that our life will be happier if we are in a romantic relationship. However, most of the popular songs tend to focus on themes like love and everyday life. Thus, such a similar thematic emphasis shall not be seen as a fundamental connection between the two songs.

Despite the noticeable differences between the two songs in terms of their content, listeners seem to focus more on the issue of rip-offs. It is not clear to some listeners which song is the original or the first composition, as can be seen from the following comments left by listeners on Youtube.<sup>197</sup>

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are no longer with each other. Additionally, the hip-pop duo consists of two male members, making it possible for one to sing the Korean lyrics and the other to sing in English.

<sup>197</sup> Again, all the comments from the websites are originally in English and copied as they are, without corrections, except for those within the square brackets (my translations of some comments originally in Chinese).

- a. Isn't the original song a Chinese one? Or is it this one (Korean song) the original?<sup>198</sup>
- b. OMG I've been in love with the Chinese version for years it's just now that I know it's originally Korean. Thank you.<sup>199</sup>
- c. [It is unbelievable that they have copied our Taiwanese song.]<sup>200</sup>
- d. [The original song is in Korean, it is Wilber Pan who copied the song.]<sup>201</sup>
- e. First, this is a beautiful song, the lyrics are Chinese, so you are not suppose (d) to call it 'copy'. the right way you call it should be—— cover version! alright? Btw, Chinese is a language since it starts thousand years ago (and Korean is kind of like our dialect in history). Stop bullshitting about how we copied your music!...<sup>202</sup>
- f. If you can see the credits in the beginning of the video, it says “Chinese lyrics: Lin Xi; rap lyrics: Wilber Pan; CA: Choi Ji Ho, Choi Min Ho... As you can see, he never said he is the composer so where does “copy” comes in?<sup>203</sup>

The debates on which song copied the other embody listeners' experience of hearing the unfamiliarity in the familiar. The last two comments are interesting as the viewers do not equate cover songs with copies. The cover version is credited as being written by the original songwriter and thus shall not be necessarily deemed negative. The label 'cover version' they apply to the song acknowledges the value of the Chinese song which sustains the life of the work in a different language other than Korean. It can therefore be said that the practice of covering foreign songs is an important means of reaching a wider audience.

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<sup>198</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tqbg2vfiOE> (last accessed 24 June 2015).

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRsy\\_jrHTNw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRsy_jrHTNw) (last accessed 24 June 2015).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJA5oTYzCRw> (last accessed 24 June 2015).

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

### 6.4.3 Self-Translation in Self-Creation: Writing Cantonese and Mandarin Lyrics

Before initiating the discussion on Leung's practice of writing two sets of lyrics in Cantonese and Mandarin, it is necessary to clarify my view that Cantonese and Mandarin are two dialects of the Chinese language. The relationship between Mandarin and Cantonese is much-debated, as (socio-) linguists are interested in whether language variants shall be regarded as separate languages or dialects of a single language (Haugen 1966). The outcry caused by one post of Hong Kong's education department that "Cantonese is not an official language" is a case in point.<sup>204</sup> The post implicitly claims that Cantonese is a dialect of Chinese. The main reason for me to choose to support this point of view is that Cantonese and Mandarin speakers share the same writing system. Although Cantonese and Mandarin are not mutually intelligible to each other due to the phonological differences, the expressions can be understood by Mandarin speakers if written down in words. Hence, I would say switching between Cantonese and Mandarin is a type of intralingual translation in Jakobson's terminology (1959). However, given that language is a product of the thought and behaviour of a society, Hong Kong has a unique history different from that of mainland China,<sup>205</sup> therefore, the differences between Cantonese and Mandarin cannot be overlooked.

In response to a query about how he organises his thoughts or ideas in writing lyrics as spoken Cantonese is quite different from written Cantonese during an interview with *Jing bao* 晶报 [Jing Newspaper] of Shenzhen Press Group in July 2015,<sup>206</sup> Leung replied:

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<sup>204</sup> More details are covered by the *Economist* in February 2014, which can be read at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/02/economist-explains-8> (last accessed 9 August 2015).

<sup>205</sup> One convincing example is the policy of 'one country, two systems' practiced by the Chinese government after resuming the exercise of its sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, taking into account the social differences of two regions.

<sup>206</sup> The report is available at [http://jb.sznews.com/html/2015-07/23/content\\_3288601.htm](http://jb.sznews.com/html/2015-07/23/content_3288601.htm) (last accessed 16 December 2015).



In fact, I do not feel constrained when searching for ideas to stimulate my writing. However, when turning abstract ideas into concrete objects, I tend to move between the two different systems and think of proper linguistic forms in Mandarin.

As Chu and Taft (2011) argues, Cantonese has nine tones whilst Mandarin has four. Therefore, in comparison, there can be more potential for different melodic constructs with Cantonese lyrics. The reduction in tones in Mandarin and its phonological and syntactic changes inevitably restricts the lyricist in linguistic reconstruction. From this perspective, we can say that navigating between Cantonese and Mandarin as well as two cultural systems entails some interpretation, which, in essence, is similar to translating a foreign song to Chinese. Leung's practice of writing lyrics in Mandarin, which is not his mother tongue, is thus an act of (mental) translation. Based on this, I would consider Mandarin and Cantonese songs penned by Leung as intralingual self-translations. Now we are going to examine some concrete examples to see how much of the original text has been carried over to the new text through Leung's self-translation.

The song *Keige zhi wang* K 歌之王 [the King of Karaoke], released in September 2000, was included in Eason Chan's first Cantonese album *Dade huore* 打得火热 [Intimacy] after he joined EEG. The singer subsequently recorded the song in Mandarin with the same title as a track for his first Mandarin album released in July 2001. Thanks to the Mandarin album, the song *Keige zhi wang* in particular, Chan equally achieved a great success in mainland China and Taiwan. According to Tao (2010)<sup>207</sup> and one report from *Southern Metropolitan Daily*,<sup>208</sup> the Cantonese

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<sup>207</sup> Tao's report can be read at <http://men.sohu.com/20101207/n278133226.shtml> (last accessed 26 June 2015). In Chinese, *Southern Metropolitan Daily* is known as *Nanfang dushi bao* 南方都市报.

<sup>208</sup> It is one of the top 10 daily newspapers in China. The report can be read at [http://ent.163.com/edit/020422\\_020422\\_119149.html](http://ent.163.com/edit/020422_020422_119149.html) (last accessed 26 June 2015).

song was composed at a time when karaoke singing gained wide popularity among the general public since the mid-1990s. This can partially explain why the title of the song is given as ‘the king of karaoke’. It is interesting to note that both versions of the song have truly become popular karaoke songs and won several awards. Moreover, Chan himself has become one of the most popular singers with the title of ‘the king of Karaoke’ ever since. The lyrics of both versions are written by Leung and let us briefly look at how Leung conveys his ideas in Cantonese and Mandarin by analyzing the lyrics in the following section.

Table 6.3 A Comparison of Cantonese Lyrics and the English Translation

Cantonese Lyrics <sup>209</sup>	English Translation
Verse 1: 我唱得不够动人 你别皱眉	I cannot sing well, please don't frown upon me
我愿意和你约定至死	I'd promise that I will love you until I die
我只想嬉戏唱游 到下世纪	I just wanna continue singing into the next century
请你别嫌我将这煽情奉献给你	Please understand me, it's my passion for you.
还能凭甚么 拥抱若未能令你兴奋	What else can I do, if hugging fails to make you excited
便宜地唱出 写在情歌的性感	I can sing out so easily the emotions embodied in the lyrics
还能凭甚么 要是爱不可感动人	What else can I do, if love cannot touch you
俗套的歌词煽动你恻忍	I can only wish you would be moved by those tacky lyrics of love songs
Coda: 我只想跟你未来 浸在爱河	I only wanna be with you for the rest of my

<sup>209</sup> The official MV of the Cantonese song is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sm\\_DVsixxsk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sm_DVsixxsk) (last accessed 20 July 2015).

	life
而你那呵欠绝得不能绝 绝到溶掉我	But your yawning (a sign of feeling bored and tired) finally made me desperate

As noted by He (2012: 85-86), lyrics of the Cantonese version consist of many song titles such as ‘*yueding*’ 约定 [Promise] and ‘*yongbao*’ 拥抱 [Hugging]. Its introduction(music) is also similar to that of the song ‘*Yueding*’ (1999). *Keige zhi wang* is a typical example of the songs by replicating and putting together lyrics of other previously existing songs.<sup>210</sup> The lyrics thus contain several references and create different layers of meaning through intertextuality.

In order to better understand He’s point, one can listen to the complete song from beginning to end. Throughout Leung’s lyrics, the protagonist tries to express his love towards the girl by singing songs. Love songs can be quite cheesy but those romantic words do provide an alternative way of expressing one’s feelings. However, no matter how hard the protagonist tries by singing many songs, the girl still ignores him, which is evident in the line preceding the coda “米高峰都因我动容……你怎么竟然说 K歌之王是我” [even the microphone feels touched by me but you simply say to me “you are the king of Karaoke”].

The same applies to the Mandarin version, the lyrics of which consist of even more song titles such as ‘*wo*’ 我 [I], ‘*ni*’ 你 [You], ‘*zaihu*’ 在乎 [Care] and ‘*aiqing*’ 爱情 [Love], as can be seen in Table 6.4 below. Besides the differences in song titles, another obvious difference is that slight changes have been made to the melody, for instance, the introduction of the song ‘*Yongxin liangku*’ 用心良苦 [Making Earnest Efforts] has been used in order to correspond with the first line of the lyrics containing the phrase ‘*yongxin liangku*’. Rhymes can be found throughout the two songs, although they have different rhyme patterns, which can be attributed

<sup>210</sup> Visit <http://www.doc88.com/p-783378056385.html> for more information about the song titles mentioned in the song (last accessed 10 July 2015).

to the phonologic differences between Cantonese and Mandarin. On the whole, the Mandarin version follows a similar pattern by grouping together song titles to represent the same theme, i.e. the protagonist loves the girl very much but his hope turns to despair in the end due to the girl's complete indifference. In particular, in the penultimate verse, the Mandarin lyrics read “让我成为了无情的K歌之王，麦克风都让我征服” [I have become the ruthless King of Karaoke, even the microphone is conquered by me]. This line, similar to the Cantonese one, reiterates the song title and embodies the disappointment of the protagonist. After all, he can win the heart of the microphone but not that of his beloved.

Table 6.4 A Comparison of Mandarin Lyrics and the English Translation

Mandarin Lyrics <sup>211</sup>	English Translation
Verse 1: 我以为要是唱得用心良苦	I thought as long as I made earnest efforts and sang the song well
你总会对我多点在乎	You would care about me
我以为虽然爱情已成往事	I thought although our love was over
千言万语 说出来可以互相安抚	speaking about the story could comfort each other
期待你感动 真实的我们难相处.	I hope you will be touched. It is hard for us to get along with each other in reality.
写词的让我 唱出你要的幸福	The lyricist enabled me to sing out the happiness you want
谁曾经感动 分手的关头才懂得	Who felt touched? I did not realise until after we broke up
离开排行榜更铭心刻骨	No longer being in the music chart makes the song even more unforgettable.

<sup>211</sup> The official MV of the Mandarin song is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iw3WgP8A18I> (last accessed 20 July 2015).

Coda: 我想来一个吻别作为结束	I wanna end this and say goodbye with a kiss
想不到 你只说我不许哭 不让我 领悟	But to my surprise, you just say to me “don’t cry” and refuse to kiss me.

It is worth mentioning that in the official MV of the Mandarin version, the singer is filmed to be holding the microphone and passionately singing in a karaoke bar. The crowd around him is drinking and laughing but rarely paying attention to his singing. After the singer finishes his song, he receives no applause but to find the microphone grabbed away by the girl he loves. Here, the irony is further highlighted, as the singer feels lonely when surrounded by many people including his beloved, who seem oblivious to his efforts anyway. In contrast, the video of the Cantonese version is set against a more private background, i.e. his flat. The singer is filmed to be singing songs to his recorder and giving the recording to the girl he likes. Both the singer and the girl are motionless for most of the time. It is made clear throughout the video that the singer gets rejected by the girl both when he tries to hold her hands and kiss her. As the song comes to a close, the girl no longer appears in the flat, leaving the singer alone, feeling neglected. To some degree, the MV of the Cantonese song is less dramatic, while the theme of being ignored by the person one is in love with is made more explicit in the video of the Mandarin song.

Based on the analysis above, it is therefore reasonable to conclude that Leung’s Cantonese and the Mandarin lyrics for *Keige zhi wang* share similar stylistic features and semantic themes, despite differences in details. It is hard to pinpoint how much of the first song has been carried over into Leung’s creation of the second song through self-translation. The boundaries of ‘authorship’ and ‘translator’ seem to have dissolved.

The last example I am going to discuss here is the Cantonese song *Fushi*

*shanxia* 富士山下<sup>212</sup> [At the bottom of Mount Fuji] (2006) and the Mandarin version *Aiqing zhuanyi*<sup>213</sup> both sung by Eason Chan. The two songs share the same melody and it is said that after watching the film *Aiqing hujiao zhuanyi* 爱情呼叫转移 [Call for Love],<sup>214</sup> the singer thought that the melody would fit the film and then asked Leung to write Mandarin lyrics for him.<sup>215</sup>

Table 6.5 *Fushi shanxia* and *Aiqing zhuanyi*

Cantonese Lyrics (Chorus)	Mandarin Lyrics( Chorus)
谁都只得那双手 靠拥抱亦难任你拥有 [Like everyone has two hands, you can use them to hug me but that does not mean you can possess me]	把一个人的温暖转移到另一个的胸膛 [When starting a new relationship after a break up]
要拥有必先懂失去怎接受 [Losing someone you love is painful, but you will come to cherish love more]	让上次犯的错反省出梦想 [We always blame ourselves for previous failed relationships]
曾沿着雪路浪游[We took a romantic walk through the snowy road when we were together]	每个人都是这样 [Everyone does this]
为何为好事泪流 [Why cry over such a sweet thing]	享受过提心吊胆 [As we have all been hurt before ]
谁能凭爱意要富士山私有 [No one can take Mount Fuji away with	才拒绝做爱情代罪的羔羊 [We tend to be more cautious, do better

<sup>212</sup> The song is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VON6EEeRB34> (last accessed 20 July 2015).

<sup>213</sup> The song is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P03Vi\\_qTQJU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P03Vi_qTQJU) (last accessed 20 July 2015).

<sup>214</sup> The film is a Chinese romantic comedy film in Mandarin which premiered in 2007. The film mainly depicts the process of a divorced man finally finding his love again after having romantic encounters with several women.

<sup>215</sup> The information is available at <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2007-02-02/16171436884.html> (last accessed 16 January 2016).

him no matter how much he likes the scenery ]	and hope the new relationship can work out ]
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If we compare the Mandarin with the Cantonese lyrics, it can be argued that the two songs tell different stories. The Cantonese song is written in a way as if the protagonist is telling his ex-girlfriend not to look back but move on, since their love is over. In comparison, the Mandarin song is designed to correspond with the movie plot, which conveys that the path to true love is not always easy. That is: our heart may be broken for several times before we find the right man or woman, but we need to overcome the fear and be courageous.

In response to one music fan's comment that the Mandarin version is not as nice as the Cantonese version, Leung stated:

First, chances are your preconceived opinions hinder you from seeing things in an unbiased way, as *Fushi shanxia* came out first. Second, the two songs are designed to be different. The former song is structured as if telling a story, a melancholy one. The lyrics not only describe the specific scenery of Mount Fuji, but also contain many metaphors of love and some truth about love. While for *Aiqing zhuanyi*, which was written specifically for the film, I had to take a more rational approach to convey to the listeners why people love each other and why our relationships change over time.<sup>216</sup>

On another occasion,<sup>217</sup> Leung similarly revealed that

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<sup>216</sup> This information was shared by Leung with his fans and the host when invited to appear on *Xiaocui shuoshi* 小崔说事 [Xiao Cui's Talk Show], one popular TV show broadcast on CCTV 1. The full episode broadcast on 23 May 2012 is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M3gdeQeJUQ&feature=youtu.be> (last accessed 23 September 2015).

<sup>217</sup> The information is available at <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2007-02-02/16171436884.html> (last accessed 16 January 2016).

As the melody itself is very emotionally contained, I have described a love story with many plots or scenes for visualisation purpose according to its strong emotion needs in the Cantonese version. Whereas, concerning the Mandarin version, I try not to write sentimental lyrics as *Aiqing hujiao zhuan yi* is a comedy. Hence, I have to come up with another perspective on characteristics of love.

Leung's opinions here highlight a key point that he has no intention of telling the same story in two different language variants. In other words, it is a deliberate choice for Leung to write totally different lyrics or redo 'a painting in a different shade' (Devarrieux 1993:15, as cited in Baker 1998: 257). Sometimes, it is the listener's assumption that the Mandarin lyrics could claim their origin from the Cantonese ones, as the Cantonese lyrics are usually composed first. Leung's reply also resonates with Tanqueriro's observation that a self-translator can "move more confidently in constructing a new linguistic universe since he will not be conditioned by the linguistic universe of the source language and he will know with the utmost certainty when he is justified in departing from the original text and when he is not" (Tanqueiro 2000: 59). As the author of the bilingual lyrics, Leung does enjoy an authority and a liberty that other translators usually lack.

The issue of self-translation described here is worth elaborating further. Self-translation has hardly been the focus of attention within TS, as the discipline tends to focus on the fidelity of the relationship between STs and TTs. As Rainier Grutman suggests in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* that "translation scholars themselves have paid little attention to the phenomenon, perhaps because they thought it to be more akin to bilingualism than to translation proper" (1998: 17). What emerges from the analysis of Leung's pair of Mandarin and Cantonese lyrics is that normally there are no significant alternations to the musical



and formal features of the source songs. In terms of content, the Mandarin lyrics bear little semantic relationship to the Cantonese ones. The same applies to the cover songs penned by him set to foreign melodies which have been previously analysed. Although the cover versions and foreign songs share the same or very similar melody, they are not matching pairs as faithfulness or close adherence of the original lyrics is not the goal.

As I have shown here, I would argue that writing two sets of lyrics to a piece of existing music is strongly motivated by an attempt to appeal to two groups of different audiences. With a different listener in mind, Leung deliberately chose not to create a replica of the original text in either Cantonese and Mandarin, although sometimes the cover versions appropriate some parts of the source lyrics. Switching back and forth between different languages (or different variants of the same language, Cantonese and Mandarin in the current discussion) and corresponding poetics, Leung is a self-conscious mediator between two different cultural settings. From this perspective, Leung does a similar job to a translator in a general sense who deals with not only the specific linguistic aspects of the text, but also the cultural import and export.

A noticeable difference might be the apparent ‘unfaithfulness’ of cover songs, which is not surprising. After all, Leung, as a self-translator, has no concept such as an original in mind. Nonetheless, no one can deny that certain elements of a pre-existing song with different degrees of intertextuality have been lifted out of its original context to make a new one in Leung’s lyric writing. In particular, the role of listeners cannot be ignored in the construction of a song’s meaning. From the perspective of listeners, to identify the intertextuality between two songs relies on whether or not they know any of the songs. In most cases, the musical borrowings make listeners more aware of the existence of another song, as we have seen in the case of *Budebu ai*.

## 6.5 A Bourdieusian Perspective on Leung's Lyric Writing Practice

To recapture what has been said about Leung's lyric writing career in the previous discussion, it can be claimed that Leung's progress from being a novice trying hard to get into the music industry into today's most established lyricist in Chinese-speaking community has not been easy. With regard to Leung's practice of writing lyrics and occasionally contributing to the production of cover songs, the traditional linguistic model of equivalence is less useful to apply. To better understand the factors influencing the creation of cover songs as well as their functioning in the receiving culture requires contextual knowledge of the society, practice of those who are involved and their interaction within the field of music production. Thus, this section aims to conduct a Bourdieusian analysis of Leung's lyric writing, thereby examining the bigger social environment where Leung is embedded and how Leung relates to other agents in the field.

### 6.5.1 Agents, Positions and Power Relations in the Field of Music Production

Before we start examining the factors influencing Leung's writing, it might be beneficial to revisit some of Bourdieu's notions in Section 2.5.1. Through the Bourdieusian lens, *fields* function as the social spaces in which agents' habitus and values are formed. Based on the interests and beliefs generated within the field, agents compete against each other for advantageous positions. There exist certain entry requirements for agents to initially participate in a social field. Bearing this in mind, it may become possible to identify with Leung's struggle for success or recognition, as evidenced in his words about the song *Xiyan de n iren*:<sup>218</sup>

At the time of announcing the competition results, I simply wished I could win.

Before becoming a professional lyricist, I had already written lyrics for over 300

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<sup>218</sup> This self-narration appears in the CD 1 of *Linxi zizhuan er* which can be accessed at <http://baike.baidu.com/view/939213.htm> (last accessed 25 July 2015).

songs. In the third year of my middle school, I set my mind to be a lyricist. Therefore, I was so desperate to have the chance of entering the field with this song.

Once the participants have developed competency and are able to enter into the field, an important determinant of their hierarchy in the space is the distribution of different kinds of resources, or *capital*, among individuals who inhabit the field. Leung's career trajectory is therefore a process of successfully accumulating the capital valued by the field of music production and ultimately securing a dominant position. Leung's long-standing interest in words and self-motivation, educational training in literature at university, self-learned knowledge of music fundamentals as well as the ability to use the words artistically can all be conceptualised as his 'cultural capital'. Despite his possession of certain cultural capital, Leung was not endowed with much social, economic and symbolic capital in the beginning. As he climbed the career ladder, Leung acquired new collective forms of cultural capital such as knowledge of the business side of the music industry and a willingness to work through rejections, which, together with his constant creative efforts, brought him more opportunities and subsequently more recognition.

To cite an example of his love of reading, Leung revealed that once intrigued by China's garden design tradition, he read many related books of his own accord. Unexpectedly, the 9th China (Beijing) International Garden Expo in 2013 invited him to write theme songs, an occasion which he could make full use of his newly absorbed knowledge on the topic.<sup>219</sup> From this perspective, Leung's real commitment to reading has substantially prepared him for new opportunities, a way of transforming his cultural capital into more economic and symbolic capital. This example reinforces Bourdieu's (1986) view of the convertibility of different forms of

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<sup>219</sup> This example was given by Leung himself at a talk with the students in the Chinese University of Hong Kong on 31 October 2013. Relevant report can be seen at <http://www.punchmagazine.hk/2013/讀詞人-林夕中大博群講座後記/> (last accessed 6 May 2015).

capital. Seen from this angle, Leung's experience of being a newspaper editor, working in the radio and as creative director for different media institutions prior to becoming a full-time lyricist has evolved into an added advantage.

As its name implies, economic capital denotes one's financial status. Since Leung is acclaimed as Hong Kong's lyric master, many people are curious about how much money he can make from his career. According to Wu Jia'ai 吴加爱, the general manager of EMI Music Publishing Asia at the time of the interview in 2012,<sup>220</sup> Leung was paid 3000 Hong Kong dollars (around 250 British Pound Sterling) for penning lyrics for one song. This fee, generally known as an advance payment within the music industry, is not significantly high, which is because Hong Kong has a relatively sound royalty system. In actuality, the royalties generated through different ways, such as karaoke streaming and downloads of the mobile ringtones, constitute the bulk of income for Leung and any other lyricist or composer. Logically speaking, Leung can accumulate large volumes of economic capital after authoring so many popular songs. However, as indicated in his Sina Weibo post refuting one report of him planning to give up writing lyrics due to low payment in 2010, economic rewards is not what has attracted him to the profession of writing lyrics.<sup>221</sup> That money is not a very important factor for Leung clearly illustrates Bourdieu's disavowal of economic interests to pursue one's art in its purest form.

Bourdieu's concept of social capital associates itself with social relations, networks and resources, which the agents can utilise in their social struggles. As suggested by Anheier et al (1995), the transformation of cultural capital into social capital is easier than the other way around. Leung's creative and constructive deployment of words has earned him opportunities of writing songs for different

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<sup>220</sup> The interview is shown on Episode 6 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9Uox6vpOWc> (last accessed 23September 2014).

<sup>221</sup> This information was revealed in his Sina Weibo post on 6 August 2010 (last accessed 23 September 2014).

singers. When asked about whether there are many young lyricists as successful as Leung in Hong Kong's music industry, Jolland Chan, another famous Cantonese lyricist, said the following words:

There has been an increasing trend to write songs for one's good friends. By 'good friends', I mean a group of people, a circle of acquaintances, who simply keep all the opportunities to themselves. A producer has a bunch of friends whilst a media person has his or her group of friends. With friends helping each other, fewer and fewer opportunities remain open for other lesser known lyricists. Leung and Wyman Wong (another famous Hong Kong lyricist) have shored up the whole music market [...] As a consequence; it is true that not many young emerging lyricists have established their fame so far. (Huang et al 2010: 59)

As apparent in the above quoted message, Leung assumes a hegemonic position in the field of lyric writing thanks to his high level of social capital. This is further confirmed by words of Wu Jia'ai that

Leung is very lucky as many record company bosses like cooperating with him. There are a myriad of reasons, not merely because of his ability to write great lyrics. Many other lyricists can write well, but Leung is preferred because he is able to build a good relationship with record label staff.<sup>222</sup>

The high-trust relationship enables Leung to maintain the existing cooperation with those singers, some of whom are already popular enough to generate a substantial amount of followers of their songs. This further helps to expand the public's awareness of Leung and bring him widespread acclaim.

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<sup>222</sup> The interview is shown on Episode 7 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, available at <http://xiyou.cntv.cn/p-15978-46ab0d64-ff7e-11e0-b091-a4badb4696b6.html> (last accessed 23September 2014).

The increased fame and prestige gained by Leung constitutes the ‘symbolic capital’. Other forms of symbolic capital that Leung has accumulated throughout his prolific career include winning lyric contests, awards, his songs topping the charts, getting more media coverage, gaining a good reputation, his books becoming best-sellers and his presence at public music events. To some extent, the name ‘Albert Leung’ functions like a brand label, which symbolizes the good quality of the lyrics and can be used as a powerful marketing force for singers. Because of his influence, Leung is able to receive more commissions from novice singers. This produces a virtuous circle and gains Leung more power. Leung’s own narrative encapsulates the relatively high degree of autonomy he currently enjoys:

The biggest part of my current happiness comes from the fact that I can choose to do nothing at all but meanwhile, there are a lot of things I would like to do. I really enjoy my ease. Or in other words, it feels as if I were retired but there were many things which could keep me busy.<sup>223</sup>

It is worth mentioning that at the year of 2002, Leung consciously decided to write fewer songs than before with the hope of giving more opportunities to younger generation of lyricists (He 2012: 31-32). According to He (ibid.: 32), Riley Lam took an apprenticeship with Leung in 2000, who helped introduce Lam to many singers. From 2010 onwards, Leung refused several invitations to write songs but recommended Lam instead. Leung’s desire to be less active in writing was revealed in his interview with *Southern Weekly*<sup>224</sup> in 2013, as can be seen in his words: “It is a

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<sup>223</sup> This was revealed by Leung in an interview shown on Episode 10 of the CCTV Music’s documentary about Leung, which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkB2dF-VZM> (last accessed 24 September 2014).

<sup>224</sup> It is a popular weekly newspaper based in Guangzhou, China, regarded as the most outspoken one in the country. The detailed report is available at <http://music.cntv.cn/2013/09/25/ARTI1380075876297222.shtml> (last accessed 3 September 2014).

prevalent practice to release EPs<sup>225</sup> and singles, meaning the market pie has shrunk. I do hope others can get more opportunities”. On the one hand, Leung’s decision to write less exemplifies his relative freedom; on the other hand, Leung’s willingness to be the mentor of young lyricists is a way of offering patronage to them and supporting their writing utilizing his accrued social and symbolic capital.

It must be borne in mind that Leung is not totally exempt from external influences. As we have seen in Section 6.3, from the idea to realization, producing a song is a highly collaborative process, which involves efforts of composers, lyricists, singers and record labels responsible for marketing and promotion. In other words, within the field of music production, as in all other fields, these agents have to deploy their endowed and accumulated capital to maintain or improve their currently position, in the form of both cooperation and competition.

Take the song *Beijing huanying ni* 北京欢迎你 [Beijing Welcomes You] for example. Inarguably, the reason why Leung was invited by the Organising Committee to pen the lyrics was because of his established position within the industry. As reported in the first episode of the CCTV Music’s documentary,<sup>226</sup> not only was the demand for high quality a stress for Leung, he and the composer had different ways of writing songs as well. To be more specific, the mainland Chinese composer and lyricist, known as Xiao Ke 小柯, revealed that he normally wrote music after the lyricist had presented him with a narrative idea, several lines or a chorus fragment. Leung’s writing principle was to hear the music first for inspiration. As a consequence, the composer and the lyricist had to negotiate with each other. It is said that Leung failed to provide any lyrics after several days and Xiao Ke had to write a temporary short verse himself as a basis for the melodic construction.<sup>227</sup> The

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<sup>225</sup> Short for extended play, an EP is a musical recording which contains more music than a single, but is too short to qualify as a full album.

<sup>226</sup> The documentary is available at <http://my.tv.sohu.com/us/17916778/12437585.shtml> (last accessed 2 September 2014).

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

fact that Leung made no changes to his working habits, to my mind, can be explained by Xiao Ke's respect towards Leung. It is, however, a rare case that Leung can do whatever he wants. More often than not, Leung has to make compromises to meet the demands of singers, music producers and censorship, as discussed previously.

This relates to another point that agents try to obtain capital which is in their interest, as different agents may have their own perception of the importance of different forms of capital. For instance, economic capital may be less attractive to Leung than being able to write lyrics freely, but the music industry attaches great importance to economic benefits of their products. This is especially the case with covering foreign songs in pop music scene, which demands relatively cheaper production cost than writing new songs from scratch. The need to capitalise on the much bigger market of mainland China and Mandarin-speaking regions at large works as a catalyst for Hong Kong record labels and singers to record songs in Mandarin. Desire for economic capital also accounts for the fact that some record labels approach Leung, wanting him to write hit songs or chart toppers, which have the potential to bring in better record sales and economic gains for them.

The analysis in Section 6.4 shows that in helping with the production of cover songs, Leung does not take into account whether his lyrics are faithful to the original. This is because how to rewrite words to fit in nicely with the pre-existing melody is prioritised by Leung, who has to endow songs with artistic and market value. His attitudes and acts of rewriting are further reinforced by the the positive reception of cover songs among listeners.

Michael Au Ding-yuk, a famous music producer in Hong Kong, shares his opinion on the phenomenon of covering foreign songs in the Cantopop scene in an interview that "We musicians might care whether the music is authentic or just a cover, but for them (consumers) [...], they won't stop buying it simply because it is a cover" (as cited from Yau, 2012: 27). This corresponds with many opinions of the music fans who care little about whether the melodies are foreign or not as long as



the songs are pleasing to the ear. The following comment posted in an online forum is one case in point:

Concerning music authenticity, it really does not matter as long as the covering is done on the basis of respecting the original composer. After all, it will be easier for Chinese-language songs to appeal to the market of Chinese audiences. It is just like watching a film, some people like watching it in its original language whilst others prefer the dubbed version.<sup>228</sup>

This indicates that what is recognised as valuable is a fluid concept, as record companies, lyricists and listeners may attach importance to different aspects of a song. Summing up what has been said, Leung is an artist, who tries to write good lyrics aesthetically and philosophically on the one hand; on the other hand, he has to identify himself with commercial producers and adjust himself to external constraints due to the nature of music industry being mass-oriented and interest-driven.

### 6.5.2 Habitus of the Lyricist

Having outlined the forms of capital and the agents in the field of music production where Leung mainly associates himself with, this section explores how Leung has been exposed to different contexts and changing situations, and how he has modified his own dispositions and rules of writing lyrics throughout his social trajectory.

Leung had strained relationships with his ill-tempered father throughout his childhood and university years. When reflecting on his childhood in an interview, Leung said, “My father always got unreasonably irritated and I was bombarded with

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<sup>228</sup> The post can be read at <http://bbs.ngacn.cc/read.php?tid=3442146> (last accessed 20 December 2015).

sharp criticism. However, I would say it is a blessing in disguise, as those very days have shaped me into a mild-tempered man with gentle disposition”.<sup>229</sup> According to Leung, just because of those unhappy days, he realised the importance of being reasonable and creating harmony in relationships with others. This, I would argue, also helps Leung to develop good relationships with singers and music producers, and tolerate their demands for modifying lyrics.

Against such a backdrop, Leung claimed that when he was a kid, reading books made him most happy, which inspired an interest in writing poems and lyrics, as can be seen in the following words:<sup>230</sup>

As early as in the third year of my middle school, reading the *Baixiang cipu* 白香词谱 [Anthology of ci poems tunes] (1795),<sup>231</sup> I was intrigued enough to try and figure out how rules and forms of classical poetic composition worked, including the level and oblique tones, and rhyme scheme. Though initially producing my own poems looked just like word games to me, it seems that I was destined to write lyrics. I don't know why, I just love it.

From this perspective, Leung's engagement in writing lyrics was not accidental. Leung's family upbringing not only plays an essential role in shaping his interest in literature and writing, but also impacts his perceptions and practices of writing lyrics to some extent. To cite an example, different from a tumultuous relationship with his father in his transition into adulthood, Leung was much closer to his mother in the family. Sometimes, Leung felt sorry for not being able to treat his mother more nicely. According to Leung, he once lost temper in front of his mother and blamed himself

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<sup>229</sup> The interview is shown on Episode 10 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkB2dF-VZM> (last accessed 26 September 2014).

<sup>230</sup> Information is available at [http://ent.ifeng.com/idolnews/hk/detail\\_2007\\_09/06/21940\\_0.shtml](http://ent.ifeng.com/idolnews/hk/detail_2007_09/06/21940_0.shtml) (last accessed 20 July 2015).

<sup>231</sup> This is a collection of 100 accessible poems from Tang through to Qing times, edited by Shu Menglan 舒梦兰 (1759-1835), a Qing Dynasty writer and poet.

for being nicer to strangers than close family members. When Leung found it hard to apologise to his mother, singer Eason Chan, working on a new album at that time, invited him to write lyrics based on some given topics. An inner drive to communicate more with his mother impelled Leung to select the topic related with family bonds and communication. That is how one of Eason's hits *Shall We Talk*, a song telling people to try to avoid poor communication and emotional distancing between each other, initially came into being.<sup>232</sup> This corresponds with Bourdieu's view that an agent perceives things, adapts, and acts in a way that is congruent with his or her habitus. Following this, habitus is predominantly reflective of one's process of socialisation but in turn conditioned and reproduced by his or her social actions. Put another way, one's habitus is not static and is open to later influence. According to Leung,<sup>233</sup>

During the first two or three years after becoming a professional lyricist, I rarely took rhyme and meter into consideration in writing lyrics. This was heavily influenced by my reading of new Chinese poetry, many of which were unrhymed. In addition, I was young at that time and deliberately wanted to be innovative and perhaps revolutionary by not following the general rule of writing rhymed lyrics. However, it gradually dawned on me that apart from the commercial needs of songs, rhyme and meter, as a literary device, could make the lyrics more rhythmic.

If we see in retrospect Leung's educational milieu, and the fact that his research

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<sup>232</sup> The background information about the song *Shall We Talk* is given by Leung himself in Episode 10 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxkB2dF-VZM> (last accessed 26 September 2014).

<sup>233</sup> The mentioned information is available at <http://www.baidu.com/link?url=dg0zNhlfAnesXSjcUGkdZmyXUQNTBY9wpc7bzIUD5wRobFgTTGhSQDt31U4M4n0dnlINCOOg6oPYyFVBMq-7QK&wd=&eqid=bae4f5e4000051a80000000455f1ac58> (last accessed 20 December 2015).

was partially concerned with new Chinese poetry during university, it makes sense to see that his early-stage lyric writing was influenced by that particular genre of poetry. Leung's understanding that lyrics should match with and complement music after joining Music Factory and engaging in music making means that he has gradually become accustomed to the 'rules of the game'. As presented in Section 6.3, Leung has been cooperative with record labels and music producers by producing lyrics fit for the preconceived melody and the combined effect. This process of how his habitus changed illuminates Bourdieu's insight that the agent incorporates rules of 'how the game is played' through the socialisation process and adjusts to the demands accordingly.

When asked about the biggest changes in his career of writing lyrics, Leung's own reply was:

In the very beginning of my career, my lyrics mainly focused on love. It was natural as I was young at that time and for young people, love always occupies an essential part in life. The most significant change, I would say, is that I have gradually become concerned with a broad range of other things, such as astronomy, geography and history, etc. As time goes by, I have become calmer and more poised at many things. In the past, I might have seen things superficially but now I try to penetrate beyond the superficial aspects and know more about the underlying principles.<sup>234</sup>

Put simply, Leung wishes to write more philosophical lyrics beyond the theme of love, which will resonate for generations to come. It can be argued that Leung wrote many love songs earlier, which was not only because of his habitus at a young

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<sup>234</sup> This was an interview conducted by Amazon Books (China) when Leung launched one of his book *Zhiqing shiqu* 知情识趣 [Sweet and Considerate] in the online book store in 2012. A Detailed record of the interview is available at [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XNTU1MTY4OTky.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNTU1MTY4OTky.html) (last accessed 10 January 2016).

age, but also related with the fact that the theme of love has been a recurrent one in pop music. His desire of writing things beyond the topic of romance first materialised when co-working with Lo in Music Factory. This was largely because Lo was famous for being bold and unconventional as he incorporated political and ironic messages into his songs. The songwriting chemistry between the two led to one of their iconic songs *Huanghou dadao dong* as mentioned in Section 6.2.2.

In an interview with *House News*<sup>235</sup> in April 2014, Leung revealed that he was concerned with current politics but there were several problems of writing lyrics relevant to political issues in the mainstream music industry: “Firstly, I am not Deserts Chang,<sup>236</sup> neither am I a singer/ songwriter who can directly sing my compositions. I have to gain permission to publish my lyrics”.<sup>237</sup> Secondly, Leung seems to be against singing songs with lyrics totally centred on a single political event, because singing is comparatively more sensational than reading. Alternatively, if one conveys his or her personal opinion on a certain issue in the form of an opinion essay, the arguments can become much clearer. That provides an opportunity to

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<sup>235</sup> House News, or *Zhuchang xinwen* 主场新闻 in Chinese, was originally a Hong Kong news website and blog, integrating different news resources and sharing views with readers. However, after two years of running, due to consideration of less relaxing media environment of Hong Kong and lack of revenue, the website was closed on 26 July 2014. More information can be retrieved on <http://thehousenews.com/> (last accessed 17 September 2014).

<sup>236</sup> Deserts Chang, or familiarly known as Zhang Xuan 张悬 in Chinese, is a Taiwanese singer-song writer well-received among Mandopop music lovers for her indie music. It is common for the singer to get involved in debates about some sensitive matters. Chang does not avoid writing songs about social movements. One typical song example is *Meiguise de ni* 玫瑰色的你 [The rose-coloured you]. Set against the background of movement for democratic consolidation in Taiwan, the song implicitly extols those people who make sacrifices for freedom. Some recent examples include holding up the red, white and blue flag of Taiwan while performing in Manchester, UK in November 2013, as well as explicitly showing her support for the protest in Taiwan over China trade pact in April 2014. More information is available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-24856658> and <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/30/us-taiwan-protests-idUSBREA2T07H20140330> (last accessed 9 September 2014).

<sup>237</sup> The original report is found at [http://chinese.readzer.com/wp\\_content.php?wid=471709](http://chinese.readzer.com/wp_content.php?wid=471709) (last accessed 17 September 2014), but the website is currently inaccessible. It can be read at [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_ed9db68b0101i7ip.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_ed9db68b0101i7ip.html) alternatively (last accessed 10 August 2015).

elaborate on one's thoughts. In Leung's words, "many things are not that simple. For example, whether you support or oppose the protest in Taiwan over China trade pact, it is just hard to express your views clearly through short lyrics or emotional singing".<sup>238</sup>

Fung (2007) suggests that although the Chinese authorities have softened their control of popular music since the 1980s, they are still trying to orient it to be conducive to the national ideologies. Measures have been adopted to curb the oppositional ideologies in the individualistic and rebellious rock music, as exemplified in the restriction on the performance of the rock star Cui Jian 崔健.<sup>239</sup>

As told by Leung, besides some unwritten rules of avoiding sensitive topics laid down by mainland China authorities, some record companies in Taiwan also practice self-censorship. He cited an example of writing for a Taiwanese singer. When his lyrics contained the word 'zhongqiang' 中枪 [being shot by a gun], the record company insisted that the word was sensitive (for implying violence) and Leung should change it into 'shoushang' 受伤 [being hurt] so as to save them the trouble of being asked to modified later when marketing the song towards mainland China.<sup>240</sup> It becomes clear that Leung is cognisant of the necessity for politically-related or sensitive lyrics to go through rounds of censorship. This again attests to that one's habitus is a barometer of the wider social structure. Content censorship has historically been an issue for the cultural development in China. In particular, the Ministry of Culture (MOC) and that China's State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) act as China's dual gatekeepers for cultural products.

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> More information can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-25791682> and <http://online.wsj.com/articles/cui-jian-the-godfather-of-chinese-rock-n-roll-talks-about-tiananmen-1401969989> (last accessed 15 October 2014).

<sup>240</sup> This example cited by Leung can be found in one report by *Apple Daily*, a Hong-Kong-based tabloid-style newspaper <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/eneews/realtime/20140410/52372353> [last accessed 8 October 2014].

Although it is said that SAPPRFT intends to expand the country's foreign movie quota in 2017, it currently still has a strict annual quota of 34 imported films now.<sup>241</sup> Despite China's strict management on cinematic imports, there, to the best of my knowledge, seems to be no limit to the number of foreign songs introduced to Chinese audiences. Nor is there a current prescribed quota for Chinese-language songs played on Chinese public radio stations for linguistic protectionism. This, according to the translator LC in my case study, is primarily due to the reason that China is notorious for piracy. It is quite hard for the Chinese government to practice a quota on foreign-language songs. After all, it is very easy for interested Chinese music fans to buy songs from apple's iTunes store and share with fellow fans nowadays.<sup>242</sup> Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that, both gatekeepers regulate the flow of cultural products to ensure that in music making, any song, either locally produced or introduced from outside, shall not go against the political ideology advocated by the government and the Party. According to the news report on 27 August 2011,<sup>243</sup> MOC released a notice requesting all the music streaming websites and search engines to remove one hundred songs, including songs by mainland Chinese singers, Taiwanese singers and foreign artists. It is said that the one hundred songs did not obtain approval from the MOC before the music companies released them to the Chinese market, which might damage the cultural safety of the country. In 2012, a famous Chinese singer Gao Xiaosong 高晓松 similarly revealed in his Weibo that<sup>244</sup> the MOC censored the song content more and more strictly, thereby

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<sup>241</sup> Relevant information is available at

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/china-film-import-quota-increase-696708>,

<http://wallstreetcn.com/node/224514> (both last accessed 28 January 2016).

<sup>242</sup> This is based on my personal correspondence with the translator in December 2014.

<sup>243</sup> The news, with a full list of the 100 songs, is available at <http://m.china.com/neirong.jsp?forumid=1011&threadid=273037573&page=1> (last accessed 20 January 2016).

<sup>244</sup> More information is available at

<http://ent.sina.cn/music/yneidi/2012-10-30/detail-icesifvx4201483.d.html?from=mbaidu&stun=20007&vt=4> (last accessed 20 January 2016).

advising people to avoid the occurrence of Chinese character *si* ‘死’ [death] in the lyrics in writing new songs.

It is thus not surprising that the music companies try to comply with the rules set by censorship departments. Embedded in this environment, Leung is aware of the need to write apolitical songs that will conform to the mainstream pop music repertoire. As the habitus informs actors on how to orient their actions towards particular goals and strategies, it is perhaps no surprise that Leung usually chooses to write original words for cover songs as a result of disinclination to translate them. To elaborate, in response to the question whether he has ever thought of being a translator of books since he studied translation, Leung gave the following remarks:

I am not going to do translation as there are many others who will be more capable of doing that, unless I am particularly interested in the work needed to be translated. In the past, the main reason for me to study translation was simply to learn a language well. What I have benefited from translation most is that I can get a deeper knowledge about the language expression through a foreign language. For example, there are many ways of translating a Chinese sentence into English, but the first step for me is to analyse what skills have been employed in constructing the Chinese sentence itself. It will be quite interesting to think of the effect of using the same skills in English, but so far, I have not considered becoming a translator.<sup>245</sup>

Hence, Leung’s attitude of engaging in translation not for translation’s sake but alternatively for bettering his language skills, together with a lack of ‘the feel for the game of translation’, to a large extent, restrains him from substantively translating

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<sup>245</sup> The information was revealed by Leung during his interview with Amazon Books (China) when he launched one of his book *Zhiqing shiqu* in the online book store in 2012. A Detailed record of the interview is available at [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XNTU1MTY4OTky.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNTU1MTY4OTky.html) (last accessed 10 January 2016).



the foreign lyrics into Cantonese or Mandarin.

A further dimension of Bourdieu's viewpoint about the social practice is the alignment of one's habitus with the field environment, in the words, who "encounters a social world of which it is a product, is like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:7). The same metaphor has been used by Leung "I find myself as fish in water working in Music Factory".<sup>246</sup> Such a positive experience can be explained by the fact that he felt the perfect fit between his habitus and the environment where he was immersed. In contrast, Leung resigned from different jobs in the past and consciously distanced himself from doing translation work with a strong sense of 'this is not for me'. Such actions symbolise his discomfort with the context, or feeling like 'a fish out of water'.

One's habitus changes and is shaped by experiences during various stages of socialization. Just as Murtagh et al (2013) indicate, one's embodied dispositions can reproduce existing behaviors but can also generate new behaviours. On one hand, with a real fondness for writing lyrics and due to his natural disposition, Leung has never stopped writing despite the initial difficulty of gaining recognition. On the other hand, Leung tries to be responsive to what is going on in the music industry and align his habitus with the changing environment.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This case study is an attempt to look at song translation from a new angle by focusing on a less studied practice of rewriting songs. In the beginning of this chapter, Leung's writing career has been examined in retrospect. Second, I have analysed

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<sup>246</sup> The information is presented in Episode 5 of the CCTV Music's documentary about Leung, which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRmfFdxEvYQ> (last accessed 26 September 2014).

some songs of Leung to see how his lyrics relate to the original ones without recourse to traditional notions of translation. It has been found that Leung places primary emphasis on how to write words which can be matched with the foreign melodies and become marketable songs, instead of retaining the meaning of foreign words in his own words. Though most of Leung's lyrics are full or partial replacement of earlier lyrics, the explicit appropriation of the foreign melody acknowledging the source does not erase the interconnectedness between the Chinese and foreign songs. Similarly, the obvious references to the same melody between Mandarin and Cantonese songs inform the listeners to link a second song with a prior one. Leung's efforts of creating new words contribute to the continuation of the previous songs in a new setting. In other words, the practice of covering songs highlights the continuities across different languages rather than the (dis)similarities. Using Bourdieu's key concepts concerning social practices, I have examined the field of music production, alternative forms of capital valued within the field and Leung's interaction with other agents. All this enriches our understanding of how Leung has developed his own ways of writing lyrics, and why he writes new Chinese lyrics rather than translate the foreign lyrics in a conventional way. Leung's rising status in the field of writing lyrics has allowed him to claim some control over the whole production process but he is still subject to many influences coming from music producers, the melody, and the listeners, to name a few. Hence, it is important to acknowledge the complexity of producing a new song, which can take various forms and involve different agents.

## **Chapter 7 Inter-case Analysis of Agents in Song Translation**

### **Activities in China**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In previous chapters, I have illustrated how foreign songs are dealt with by the three chosen cases in their particular way, namely, a song translator, amateur translators and a professional lyricist. A central focus has been on how the broad social environment and an individual's habitus can influence the ways in which foreign songs are introduced into China. This has involved examining how their possessed capital impacts the structure and hierarchies of the fields where they are located, and how their respective fields are related to the wider fields of power and music industry. Based on existing findings, this chapter intends to compare the three different practices with each other, understanding changes across the cases from a Bourdieusian perspective. It will thereby tease out the changes in the production and reception of translated songs. To add specific details, this chapter will initially observe how the three kinds of agents deal with two song examples and then provide a comprehensive comparative analysis accordingly. This will allow me to further connect the micro-level differences (differences in the text) with other macro-level contextual differences (changes in cultural, political, economic and technological aspects of China's song translation activities over time), thereby gaining a richer understanding of the complexity and heterogeneity of song translation.

#### **7.2 Similarities and Differences in the Production and Dissemination of Translated Songs**

Although the three agents examined in previous chapters are all located in the encompassing field of song translation, the agents have their own purposes for translating songs. Xue has always tried to achieve singability in the target lyrics

whilst maintaining the overall meaning of the song. Amateur translators lay a strong emphasis on the meaning of lyrics as they do not want to give up the authenticity of the original performance. For Leung, rewriting new words and creating a new independent song is the priority. That said, one wonders whether there exist certain overlaps or similarities in terms of their concrete procedures, which I shall illustrate below with two song examples.

### 7.2.1 Song Example 1: *My Heart Will Go On*

As the theme song of the 1997 blockbuster film *Titanic*, Celine Dion's *My Heart Will Go On* (1997)<sup>247</sup> quickly became a huge worldwide hit. The song's immense popularity also resulted in a Mandarin version *Woxin yongheng* 我心永恒 (1998)<sup>248</sup> [My Heart Will Go On] by Chinese singer Mao Ning 毛宁<sup>249</sup> and a Cantonese version *Xiwo xinxian* 系我心弦 (1998)<sup>250</sup> [Tied to My Heartstrings] by Hong Kong singer Sally Yeh 叶倩文.<sup>251</sup> The lyrics were translated into Mandarin by Chen Daoming 陈道明, the former Marketing Planning Supervisor of Sony Music Entertainment from Taiwan,<sup>252</sup> while the Cantonese lyrics were written by Li Min 李敏.<sup>253</sup> Xue also translated this song into Mandarin,<sup>254</sup> which has been included in

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<sup>247</sup> With music by James Horner and lyrics by Will Jennings, the song was originally released in 1997 by Sony Music Entertainment.

<sup>248</sup> After signing with Sony Music and Shanghai Audio Visual Press (the two formed a joint venture) in 1997, the singer recorded the English song in Chinese one year later and one of his live performances can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f81uQo2qLak> (last accessed 16 December 2014).

<sup>249</sup> Relevant information is available at [http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2012-04-28/18553618902\\_3.shtml](http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2012-04-28/18553618902_3.shtml) (last accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>250</sup> Released by Warner Music Hong Kong, the song is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtrkqaasrAo> (last accessed 16 January 2016). As the Cantonese version is lesser known than Mao's version in mainland China, it is presented in Appendix 4 without going into detail in the main text.

<sup>251</sup> Information is available at <http://tv.qc99.com/mingxingziliao/23541.html> (last accessed 17 January 2016).

<sup>252</sup> Information is available at <http://tieba.baidu.com/p/642405750> (last accessed 17 January 2016).

<sup>253</sup> I got to know there are different versions of *My Heart Will Go On* via

many published song collections such as *Aosika gequ* 奥斯卡歌曲 [Oscar-winning Songs] (Xue & Huang 2002), *Mingge jingdian: waiguo zuopinjuan san* 名歌经典：外国作品卷3 [Famous Songs of All Time: Foreign Songs Volume III] (Li & Xue 2005) and *Dang women nianqing shiguang: yingwen mingge yibai shou* 当我们年轻时光：英文名歌100首 [When We Were Young: 100 Famous English Songs] (Xue 2004).

#### 7.2.1.1 Xue Fan's Translation of *My Heart Will Go On*

In line with his principle of translating songs, Xue's translation is meant to be sung. Despite this, his Chinese lyrics rarely appear in a recorded music format. As said previously, most of his translated songs are presented to the public in a printed form. Take the following images from the book *Shijie tongsu hechang zhenpin ji* (世界通俗合唱珍品集 (Xue 2006) [A Selection of Pop Choral Music] to illustrate. Except for the cover, the whole book from which the images are taken is printed in black and white. As Figure 7.1 shows, the Chinese title replaces the English one *My Heart Will Go On* while a short phrase inside the brackets means 'the song for the American film *Titanic*'. Beneath the title, information inclusive of the musical note F, *shaoman* 稍慢 [(the tempo is) relatively slow], *qingrou di* 轻柔地 [(the song shall be) sung softly], and proper credit to the original composer, the lyricist and the translator is given. For the song text, only Xue's translated lyrics are placed under the musical notation with no original English lyrics provided. One can also find that the syllables of Chinese lyrics correspond to the musical notes in terms of number, which helps to achieve the singability.

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<http://ent.sina.com.cn/2004-02-24/1012311586.html> (last accessed 10 December 2014) and searched on the Internet before identifying the singers and lyricists of different versions. The name of the lyricist who wrote the Cantonese version can be found in the MV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtrkqaasrAo> (last accessed 16 January 2016).

<sup>254</sup> [http://www.xuefan.net/sy\\_detail.asp?id=609](http://www.xuefan.net/sy_detail.asp?id=609) (last accessed 16 January 2016).

心儿永远昂扬\*  
(美国影片《泰坦尼克号》插曲)

[美] 韦尔·杰宁斯词  
[美] 杰姆斯·奥纳曲  
[美] 埃伦·比林斯雷编合唱  
薛 范译配

1 = F 4/4  
稍慢 (♩ = 96-100) 轻柔地

( 3̣ - 3̣. 2̣ 2̣3̣2̣1̣ | 2̣5̣ 5̣ - 4̣. 3̣ | 1̣ - - 6̣ | 5̣ - - 1̣ 2̣ | 3̣ - 3̣. 2̣ 2̣3̣2̣1̣ |

[6] 2̣5̣ 5̣ - 3̣ | 6̣ - - 5̣ | 2̣ - - - ) (女声齐唱)  
1. 1̣ 1̣ 1̣7̣ | 7̣ 1̣ 0 1 |  
儿 每 夜 我 总 梦 见 你

[11] 7̣ 1̣ 0 2 | 3. 43 2 0 | 1. 1 1 17̣ | 7 1 0 15̣ | 5 - - - |  
来 到 我 身 旁, 依 旧 如 同 往 常 一 样。

[16] (45 61 45 67) | 1. 1 1 17̣ | 7 1 0 1 | 7 1 - 2 | 3. 43 2 - |  
尽 管 你 我 中 间 相 隔 宇 宙 渺 茫,

[21] 女高 1. 1 1 17̣ | 7 1 0 15̣ | 5 - - - | (4 - 6 7) ||: 1 - - - |  
女低 1. 1 1 17̣ | 7 1 0 15̣ | 5 - - - | 0 0 0 0 ||: 0 0 0 0 - |  
男高 1. 1 1 17̣ | 7 1 0 15̣ | 5 - - - | 0 0 0 0 ||: 0 0 3 3 - |  
男低 1. 1 1 17̣ | 7 1 0 15̣ | 5 - - - | 0 0 0 0 ||: 0 0 3 3 - |  
你 仍 向 我 叙 说 梦 想。

Figure 7.1 Screenshot from the scanned page133 of Xue’s translation in print

[80] 5. 4 4 3 2 | 2 0 3 4 | 3 - 2 1 1 | 7 1 0 7 | 7 1 - 2 | 3. 43 2 - |  
6 - 6 6 7 | 7 0 7 7 | 1 - 2 1 1 | 7 1 0 7 | 7 6 - 6 | 7 - 7 - |  
世 长 相 伴, 你 安 然 在 我 心 上, 我 的 心 儿 永 远 昂  
4 - 4 4 5 | 5 0 5 5 | 6 - 6 6 | 5 5 0 5 | 4 4 - 4 | 5 - 5 - |  
1 - 1 1 2 | 2 0 2 2 | 3 - 3 3 | 2 2 0 2 | 1 1 - 1 | 2 - 2 - |

[86] 渐慢  
1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 0 2 - | 1 - - - | 1 - - - ||  
1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 0 2 - | 5 - - - | 5 - - - ||  
扬。 哦!  
1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 0 2 - | 3 - - - | 3 - - - ||  
1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 - - - | 1 0 2 - | 1 - - - | 1 - - - ||

歌曲说明:  
1912年,有史以来最大的一艘豪华客轮“泰坦尼克号”从英国南安普敦港首航,横渡大西洋。4月14日午夜,客轮触冰山沉没,船上有1517人遇难,获救仅712人。这一题材已被各国导演多次搬上银幕。  
1997年,美国又耗巨资拍摄了这一题材的故事片,影片以沉船事件为背景,上演了一则缠绵悱恻的爱情故事。1996年,这艘已沉没了84年的巨轮被打捞了上来,这一条新闻传播后,引起了侨居美国的一位年逾百岁的老妇人的注意。她名叫露茜,当年她就在船上,与一位画家杰基邂逅相爱。船沉时,他们彼此放弃求生的机会,都想把生的希望留给对方。最后,露茜获救,杰基被海浪吞没。  
这部影片获得1997年第70届奥斯卡11项大奖。影片主题歌由加拿大歌星席琳·迪翁演唱,风靡一时,在热门排行榜的冠军宝座上久居不下。歌曲获奥斯卡最佳电影歌曲奖;次年又获格莱美最佳歌曲奖和最佳唱片奖。  
(薛 范)

Figure 7.2 Screenshot from the scanned page 136 of Xue’s translation in print

At the bottom of the page in Figure 7.2, three paragraphs have been presented where Xue details the song’s background information, including the sinking of the

Titanic, how an American epic romantic disaster film came out in 1997 based on the accident, as well as the chart success and a selection of awards the song has won.

Aware of the existence of the other two different versions of *My Heart Will Go On* as discussed above, Xue argues that they are simply setting new lyrics to the existing tune and completely altering the original meaning. It is to be noted that Xue claims that his singable version is more faithful to the original than the other two.<sup>255</sup> However, a comparison of the three translated versions with the original English song shows that Xue might have slightly exaggerated the facts, as both the other two versions bear some resemblance to the original meaning of the words. In Xue's version, some details of the ST have also been altered.

As Table 7.1 shows, *mengxiang* 梦想 [dream] in the fourth line is added by Xue, which might be for the sake of maintaining exactly the same rhyme scheme '-ang' throughout the lyrics. Likewise, Liu and Zhao (2009:75) state that in order to use an identical rhyme, Xue makes some semantic sacrifices in changing the meaning of "never let go till we're gone" and 'door'. Moreover, Xue's lyrics do not precisely follow the sentence order of the source lyrics. As commented by Liao (2010), Xue's Chinese lyrics involve a flexible adjustment of the text.

Table 7.1 Xue's Translation of *My Heart Will Go On*<sup>256</sup> and Back-translation

Xue's Translation	Back-translation
Verse1: 每夜我总梦见你来到我身旁	Every night, I dream that you come to be my side
依旧如同往常一样	just the same as usual
尽管你我中间相隔宇宙渺茫	Despite the vast expansive universe between

<sup>255</sup> This is based on the report by *Meiri xinbao* 每日新报 [Tianjin Morning News] on 24 February 2004, which can be read at <http://ent.sina.com.cn/2004-02-24/1012311586.html> (last accessed 10 December 2014).

<sup>256</sup> Click the two separate links for the original English lyrics and Xue's translation in full: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qz3lwXEGWIM> and <http://xuefan.net/wxay.htm> (last accessed 6 August 2015).

	us
你仍向我叙说梦想	you still tell me about your dreams
<b>Chorus:</b>	
无论你身在何方	No matter where you are
我相信心儿永远昂扬	I believe you will always enliven my heart
盼你再叩我心房	wishing you can knock at my heart's door once more
只要有你在心上	As long as you are in my heart
我的心啊永远昂扬	My heart will feel enlivened forever
<b>Verse 2:</b>	
我俩一朝相恋	Once we fall in love with each other
就终生相依傍	we will be lovers for a lifetime
白头到老情谊深长	Love will grow stronger as we become older together and our hair turns gray
回想当时甜蜜，每一刻都难忘	Recalling the sweet past, I feel each moment has been unforgettable
相约终生一路同往	We have promised each other to be lifelong companions
<b>Chorus (repeated)</b>	

### 7.2.1.2 Chen Daoming's Translation of *My Heart Will Go On*

As noted in a *Xinjing bao* 新京报 [Beijing News] report,<sup>257</sup> the original soundtrack for *Titanic* was first distributed to the Chinese market by Shanghai Audio & Visual Company.<sup>258</sup> Zan Yanbin 臧彦彬, who was deputy managing director at that time, told the newspaper that “prior to the release of *Titanic*, Sony Corporation’s

<sup>257</sup> The news report on 13 April 2012 is available at <http://www.bjnews.com.cn/ent/2012/04/13/193674.html> (last accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>258</sup> This company, as an authorised user, is responsible for releasing records of Sony Music International in China. This information is retrieved from <http://cdfy.chinacourt.org/paper/detail/2013/12/id/1309250.shtml> (last accessed 6 August 2015).



chief representative in China let me listen to the song *My Heart Will Go On*. Almost instantly I was captivated by this amazing song.” Hence, he decided to release the original soundtrack in China simultaneously with the movie. Seeing that the first batch of the album sold 200,000 copies, Zan began to look for candidates to sing the Mandarin version of the soundtrack. The Deputy Director also acknowledged his worries in that “the interpretation of the Chinese singer would definitely give this song another flavour. If the song could not be sung well, it would incur a negative influence on the singer’s reputation.”

According to Machin (2010:102), pitch range can indicate emotional expressiveness. Dion’s high pitch, compared with a reasonably lower male pitch range of Mao, conveys more intense emotions. The singer Mao Ning said in a separate interview that Celine Dion was a singer in Sony Music, which, during the same period, only signed him and two other male singers in mainland China. With no female singers and few male candidates, Mao was ultimately given the chance to sing *My Heart Will Go On* in Mandarin.<sup>259</sup>

It can be seen from Table 7.2 that although the Mandarin lyrics differ significantly from the English ST, particularly in terms of the chorus and verse 2, the meaning of the opening lines in verse 1 and the thematic essence is not lost in the translation process. A rhyme pattern ‘-ong’ is used effectively in the Chinese song, making it catchy and easy to remember.

Table 7.2 *Woxin yongheng*<sup>260</sup> in 1998 and Back-Translation

Lyrics by Chen Daoming	Back-translation
Verse 1: 夜夜在我梦中	Every night in my dreams

<sup>259</sup> The interview is available at [http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2012-04-28/18553618902\\_3.shtml](http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2012-04-28/18553618902_3.shtml) (last accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>260</sup> Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f81uOo2qLak> for the full lyrics to the song (last accessed 9 August 2015).

见到你 感觉你	I see you, I feel you
我的心仍为你悸动	You still make my heart beat so fast
穿越层层时空	Travelling through time and space
随着风 入我梦	you enter my dream with the wind
你的心从未曾不同	You are still affectionate and caring towards me
<b>Chorus:</b>	
你我尽在不言中	Both you and me are silent
你的爱伴我航行始终	Your love will accompany me in sailing
飞翔如风般自由	And flying freely like the wind
你让我无忧无虑	Because of you, there is nothing I fear
永远的活在爱中	I will live in love forever
<b>Verse2:</b>	
只是一见钟情	Even though it was love at first sight
两颗心已相通	we are deeply connected to each other now
刹那化成永恒情浓	The feelings become eternal and intense in an instant
怨命运总捉弄	Fate is always playing tricks on us
缱绻时太匆匆	We love each other so much but we are facing separation
留我一世一生的痛	
<b>Chorus (repeated)</b>	leaving me in pain which will last forever

It is worth noting that in the packaging, release and promotion of the recording, the Chinese song is explicitly announced as the Chinese version of *My Heart Will Go On*. Figure 7.3 is the cover of one album containing the track, showing the Chinese singer in a colourful shirt standing with arms akimbo and a smile. The words in pink read as follows: ‘an Oscar-winning song worth hundreds of millions, the Chinese version of the theme song of *Titanic*’.



Figure 7.3 the Album Cover of One Record by Mao

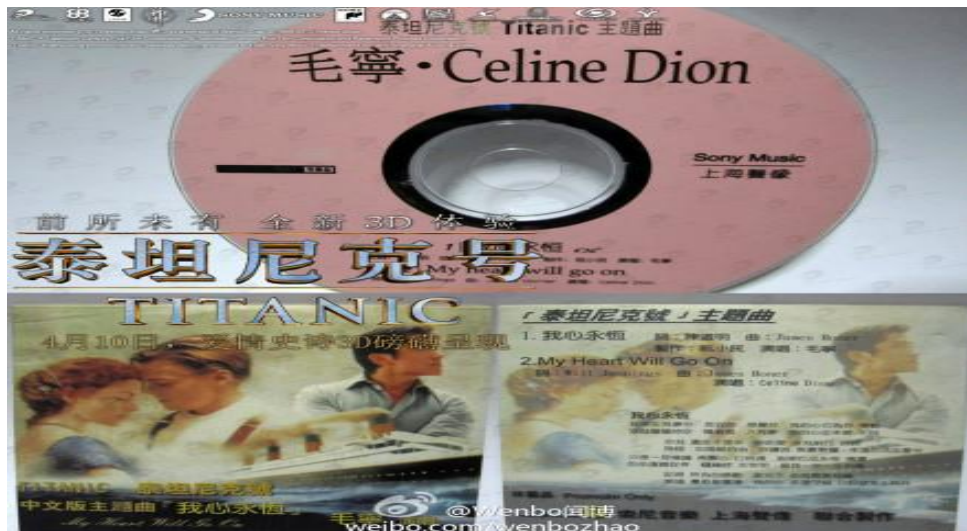


Figure 7.4 the Inside Look of Another Album by Mao

The inside of another album released by Sony Music and Shanghai Audio & Visual Company in Figure 7.4 tells a similar story. As shown on the pink disc, Mao's name is placed side by side with that of Celine Dion under a short Chinese phrase meaning "the theme song of *Titanic*". The CD insert contains not only the Chinese lyrics but also a background picture which shows Jack and Rose, main characters from the *Titanic*, snuggled up into each other's arms. Besides them, Mao looks up to his right in the picture. Such arrangement can enforce the potential buyer's

impression that Mao's song is associated with *Titanic*, who may consider it to be the Chinese version of *My Heart Will Go On*. According to Mao, he does not often perform the song *Woxin yongheng* in public, as in his mind, *My Heart Will Go On* is Celine Dion's signature song forever. In his words, "what I have done is simply introduce the song to more people in the Chinese language. It is targeting at the market of mainland China, the lyrics are good and I like them".<sup>261</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that Mao's EP *Woxin yongheng* was among the country's top 5 sales chart for six weeks after its release in April 1998.<sup>262</sup> Deputy Director Zan revealed that the composer of the song James Horner was excited for Mao's nice vocals after hearing the Chinese version. This signifies that Mao's interpretation of the English song has been professionally accepted and successful.<sup>263</sup>

In terms of listeners' response to the Chinese song sung by Mao, the following posts can be found on Sina Weibo:

- a. One day after school in the spring of 1998, my father told me that Mao Ning would sing the theme song of *Titanic*. I then asked him what type of movie it was and was told that it was an American romantic blockbuster. The memory is still fresh.<sup>264</sup>
- b. As far as I can remember, the first English song I heard was Celine Dion's *My Heart Will Go On*. However, I always sing the Chinese version with my parents in the karaoke bar. I still remember the MV, in which Mao is singing

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<sup>261</sup> More details can be found at [http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2012-04-28/18553618902\\_3.shtml](http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2012-04-28/18553618902_3.shtml) (last accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>262</sup> Information is available at <http://star.yule.com.cn/maoning/dangan.html> and [http://www.tvsou.com/starhtml/24/star\\_3\\_2446.htm](http://www.tvsou.com/starhtml/24/star_3_2446.htm) (last accessed 26 July 2015).

<sup>263</sup> Relevant information is available at <http://www.bjnews.com.cn/ent/2012/04/13/193674.html> (last accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>264</sup> [http://www.weibo.com/1672752112/ydXOWamAm?ref=&rid=8\\_0\\_0\\_2666932995830639787&type=comment](http://www.weibo.com/1672752112/ydXOWamAm?ref=&rid=8_0_0_2666932995830639787&type=comment) (last accessed 13 January 2016).

whilst standing in a car driving him around the stadium.<sup>265</sup>

- c. My Mum said that *My Heart Will Go On* sung by Mao Ning was better. I was speechless. It was not until then that I realised that Mao had sung this song in Chinese.<sup>266</sup>
- d. Mao's singing destroyed *My Heart Will Go On*. Some songs are only suitable for being sung in English.<sup>267</sup>
- e. I shared the song *Yellow* (2000) by Coldplay covered by Zheng Jun. The melody is totally the same, but the lyrics are written by Zheng. It sounds weird, just like listening to *My Heart Will Go On* covered by Mao previously. It may be due to my biases and preconceived impressions.<sup>268</sup>
- f. Whoever lacks the courage to sing the original English version can sing this (Mao's Chinese version) in KTV.<sup>269</sup>

It can be seen from the comments above that the Mandarin version of *My Heart Will Go On* has drawn mixed responses as some listeners express their strong dislike. Comparatively speaking, Mao's singing is better received among those for whom the interpretation of the song in Chinese provides an alternative way of singing *My Heart Will Go On* in KTV. This is because singing Karaoke is a popular pastime for people in Asian countries (Mitsui & Hosokawa 1998). In other words, Karaoke singing features prominently in the entertainment of Chinese people. According to a news

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<sup>265</sup> [http://www.weibo.com/1855959805/z1Nx5dz2u?ref=&rid=4\\_0\\_0\\_2666932995830639787&type=comment](http://www.weibo.com/1855959805/z1Nx5dz2u?ref=&rid=4_0_0_2666932995830639787&type=comment) (last accessed 13 January 2016).

<sup>266</sup> <http://www.weibo.com/1347605995/ziq7Fyre4?type=comment> (last accessed 13 January 2016).

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[http://www.weibo.com/2351884371/zqN76z5Au?ref=&rid=7\\_0\\_0\\_2666932995830639787&type=comment](http://www.weibo.com/2351884371/zqN76z5Au?ref=&rid=7_0_0_2666932995830639787&type=comment), this is an analogy made by a viewer when (s) he heard *Can You Feel My Love Tonight* (1999) in Chinese by Zhou Xiao'ou 周晓鸥, another Chinese singer (last accessed 13 January 2016).

<sup>268</sup> <http://www.weibo.com/1146146430/24F20faKh?type=comment> (last accessed 13 January 2016).

<sup>269</sup> [http://www.weibo.com/2089034413/yfwqlwStv?ref=&rid=3\\_0\\_0\\_2666932995830639787&type=comment](http://www.weibo.com/2089034413/yfwqlwStv?ref=&rid=3_0_0_2666932995830639787&type=comment) (last accessed 13 January 2016).

report on the website of China.org.cn in 2009,<sup>270</sup> because of their relatively conservative attitudes toward love, Chinese people tend not to openly express their admiration for others. Hence, many Chinese people choose to belt out a tune or two in a private Karaoke room as a way of expressing their feelings. As reported in the news (ibid.), Chinese people usually choose to sing Chinese pop songs instead of Western songs in Karaoke bars. In particular, middle-aged and older adults merely want to pick the songs popular in 1970s or 1980s. Many Chinese music lovers might be familiar with the melody of *My Heart Will Go On*, but cannot sing it in English. From this perspective, Mao's *Woxin yongheng* gives Chinese people an opportunity to sing *My Heart Will Go On* in a familiar language with ease. Nonetheless, Mao's singing in a similar tune has promoted general awareness of the English song to some extent.

### 7.2.1.3 Amateur Translation

If one types the Chinese words meaning 'the translation of *My Heart Will Go On*' into the search box of Baidu Knows, one is instantly presented with 4,164,588 results as shown in Figure 7.5.<sup>271</sup> Among the relevant results, one can see that some of the earliest questions were posted in 2006, whilst some others were newly posted in March 2015, as exemplified in Figure 7.6. In the answer given to the succinct post "I want the lyrics of *Titanic* and Chinese meaning", the Chinese translation is placed after the English lyrics. There is no space between each line, rendering the whole layout dense and compact. Figure 7.7 shows another answer to a similar post in 2006 "[I need] the lyrics of *My Heart Will Go On* and respective translation". As the page shows, each line of the English lyrics has been provided with the literal Chinese

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<sup>270</sup> [http://www.china.com.cn/international/txt/2009-05/27/content\\_17843947.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/international/txt/2009-05/27/content_17843947.htm) (last accessed 23 January 2016).

<sup>271</sup> The search results as of 25 March 2015, available at <http://zhidao.baidu.com/search?lm=0&rn=10&pn=0&fr=search&ie=gbk&word=My+Heart+Will+Go+On%B7%AD%D2%EB> (last accessed 15 May 2015).

meaning attached side by side. Admittedly, the answer was provided within two minutes, which was admirably instantaneous. A closer look at the answer, however, reveals some of the problems common to amateur translation. One can see from Figure 7.8 that the answer has 2096 likes, but as pointed out by some users of Baidu Knows, the answer could have been improved in terms of both the accuracy of the English lyrics and the translation. Furthermore, the parallel display of the English lyrics and Chinese literal translation is misleading. This is because the person intended to make it convenient for readers to check the meaning of the lyrics line by line, but the given translation was not a real one-to-one mapping of the lyrics.



Figure 7.5 Screenshot of the Search Results Page of 25 March 2015



Figure 7.6 Screenshot of A Post on 23 March 2015



Figure 7.7 Screenshot of A Post on 04 June 2006<sup>272</sup>



Figure 7.8 Screenshot of Some Comments<sup>273</sup> on the Given Answer

Comment 1: The translation is wrong.

Comment 2: Even the English lyrics provided by you are wrong.

<sup>272</sup> [http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/8122478.html?loc\\_ans=32344514](http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/8122478.html?loc_ans=32344514) (last accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>273</sup> My translations of comments are sorted chronologically based on the sequence of the comments.



Comment 3: If the translation is not a one-to-one match with the lyrics, then do not arrange the English lyrics and translation side by side. Maybe the person who asked the question wanted to have a close look at the meaning of each line.

Comment 4: Which is right, ‘whenever’ or ‘wherever’?

Comment 5: I think it is good, as long as it can give me a clue to the song. There is no need to translate the lyrics very precisely; after all, one does not need to sing the song in Chinese.

As hinted in the fifth comment, amateur translators usually focus on lyric comprehensibility and rarely take into consideration the need to combine words with music. Perhaps this could explain why the translations provided by amateurs remain more faithful to the literal meaning of the English words.

Besides the literal translations available on the question-and-answer site, the video of *My Heart Will Go On* has been subtitled in Chinese by different people, although the fan-made subtitles came out several years later. In the original official video<sup>274</sup> released in the end of 1997, Dion is shown to be singing on a model of the Titanic. Some film clips depicting the love story between Jack and Rose are played throughout the MV, giving the viewer a sense of familiarity. As can be seen from the video-streaming website, the song has dozens of subtitled videos with the earliest one uploaded in 2011. Some fans use the official MV or Dion’s live performance videos while others edit their own short videos using different shots from the movie, as can be seen in the following screenshots.

Irrespective of the variation in subtitle fonts and colours, lyrics alone are translated to show what they signify in all the given subtitled videos, similar to what we have seen in Baidu Knows. One notable difference is that the subtitles have to be displayed at a certain speed so that they can closely follow the original phrasing and synchronise with the dynamic moving images in the video. Figure 7.9 aptly

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<sup>274</sup> The video is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tuvz\\_9D7Ok](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tuvz_9D7Ok) (last accessed 14 February 2015).

exemplifies the result of subtitles failing to correspond to the audio track, as the subtitles for the line “you have come to show you go on” appear too early even before the singer finishes the previous line “...and spaces between us”.



Figure 7.9 Screenshots from one subtitled original MV<sup>275</sup>

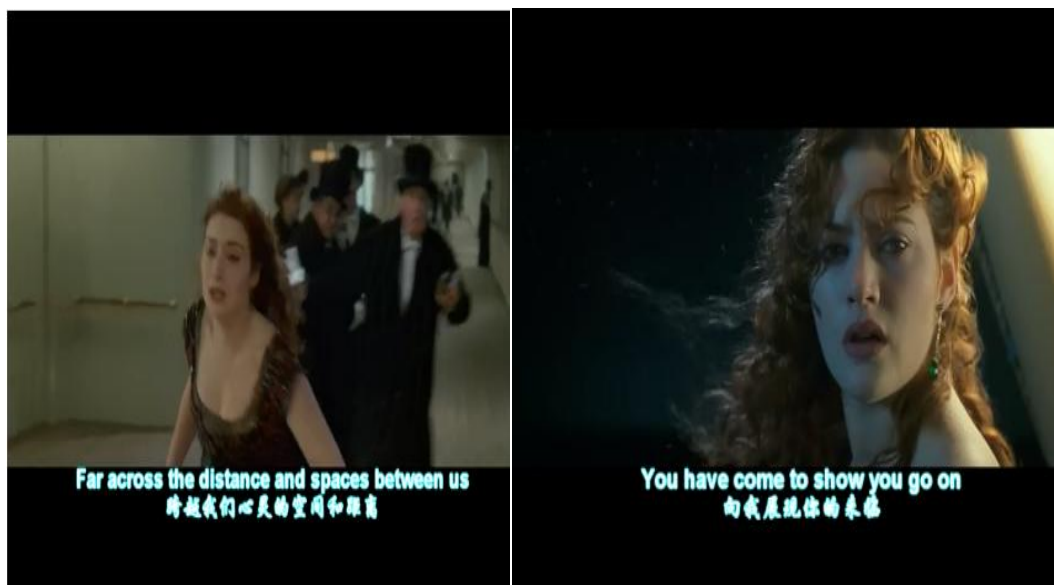


Figure 7.10 Screenshots from fan-made MVs using film scenes<sup>276</sup>

<sup>275</sup> The full subtitled video can be watched at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/118163> (last accessed 16 April 2015).

<sup>276</sup> The full subtitled video can be watched at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/727128> (last accessed 16 April 2015).

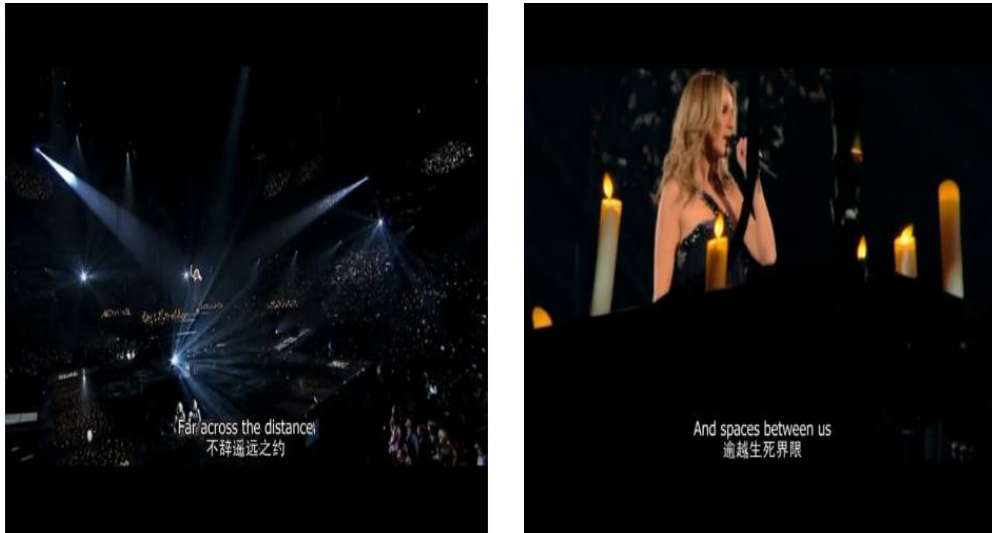


Figure 7.11 Screenshots from subtitled performance in Dion's 2008 concert in Boston<sup>277</sup>

To sum up, I have chosen *My Heart Will Go On* here to exemplify that the same original text can be dealt with differently in the same receiving culture at different times in history. *My Heart Will Go On* has attracted much attention, which is indispensable from the popularity of the *Titanic*. In what follows, I will briefly illustrate the same point with another relatively lesser known English song *Sitting Down Here* and its Chinese translations.

### 7.2.2 Song Example 2: *Sitting Down Here*

*Sitting Down Here* (1999)<sup>278</sup> is a pop song written by Norwegian singer-songwriter Lene Marlin for her 1999 debut album *Playing My Game* after signing with Virgin Records Norway.<sup>279</sup> Being one of the best selling albums in her country, it won several awards in the Spelleman, a Norwegian music award which is the equivalent of the Grammy awards but for Norwegian musicians. At Spelleman,

<sup>277</sup> The full subtitled video is available at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/308419> (last accessed 16 April 2015).

<sup>278</sup> The English song's official MV is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRIJv6LicXc> (last accessed 18 April 2015).

<sup>279</sup> The information is available at <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0549165/bio> (last accessed 23 January 2016)

*Sitting Down Here* was awarded the Best Single. The catchy single was successful across continental Europe as well, reaching No.5 in the UK Singles Chart in 2000.<sup>280</sup> Despite this, audiences in the Greater China region were less familiar with *Sitting Down Here* until the Hong Kong singer Sandy Lam recorded a Chinese cover version as *Wo zuozai zheli* 我坐在这里 [I Am Sitting down Here] in 2000.<sup>281</sup> The song *Wo zuozai zheli* was included in Lam's first album after she joined Virgin Records Taiwan. It is thus fair to say that the record label Virgin has played a critical role in her recording a cover of Lene's song. If one searches the Chinese song in Baidu Baike,<sup>282</sup> the result shows its background information, which openly specifies that it is a cover of Lene Marlin's song *Sitting Down Here* with lyrics written by Leung. Lene Marlin has been given full credit as the original composer.

On the whole, the English song is about a person being bullied with a slightly twisted perspective, which is particularly true of the line "but I've learned how to get revenge and I swear you'll experience that someday". Although the lyrics are depressing, *Sitting Down Here* remains an energy-filled and sweet song because of the upbeat melody and the singer's lyrical voice.<sup>283</sup> Unlike the preceding *Titanic* song, *Sitting Down Here* has not been translated by Xue or other practitioners of his time. This may be caused by the decrease in the number of song translators and a decline in song translation activities from the late 1990s onwards. Another possible

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<sup>280</sup> More information is available at

<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/lene-marlin-mn0000521178/biography> (last accessed 18 April 2015).

<sup>281</sup> This can be proved by many listeners' comments, for instance, on the website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hJa4USu2XM>, we can find that "I heard this version b4 (before) I heard the English version. Is the Chinese song as extreme as Lene's?" (original English post) and "I heard Sandy's version first and later Lene's version. Each has its own uniqueness" (last accessed 18 April 2015).

<sup>282</sup> It is a Web-based encyclopedia developed by the Chinese search engine Baidu, similar to Wikipedia.

[http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=5WMSKUWI5zDLjVlzp0HxR-noS9RZtiQdWSZLCIgl94u2lChA1xWTladzKtcCc\\_YfElah9OMNDztpBZjm7QQBa](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=5WMSKUWI5zDLjVlzp0HxR-noS9RZtiQdWSZLCIgl94u2lChA1xWTladzKtcCc_YfElah9OMNDztpBZjm7QQBa).

<sup>283</sup> This is reflected in most listeners' comments, as exemplified on the website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX16ogWvfYQ> (last accessed 22 April 2015).

reason could be that *Sitting Down Here* is a pop song, which is not the common type of songs Xue translates. In this context, we can only find Lam's cover version of the English song and different translations done by music fans. Regarding the cover version, as Table 3 shows, the meaning of the Chinese lyrics differs considerably from that of the English ones. The only thing that has not been altered is the title and the repeated line "I'm sitting down here". Starting from the place where the singer sits, the Chinese song unfolds the singer's observation of the surroundings, which further elicits her memories of her past relationship. On the whole, Lam's song depicts a very personal but neutral look into the passage of time whereas the English one shows a less happy experience. Nonetheless, listeners seem to be unconcerned with their semantic disparity, focusing more on whose version is better. Leung's creative flair and lyrics have been noticed by some listeners, substantiating that lyricists' fame can enhance the popularity of a song to some degree.<sup>284</sup>

The song *Wo zuozai zheli* has gained wide popularity among Chinese audiences, but it took a while for listeners to realise that Sam's song was a cover version of *Sitting Down Here*. This can be seen from the questions regarding the origin of *Wo zuozai zheli* on Baidu Knows,<sup>285</sup> most of which have been posted since the mid-2000s. Put differently, the cover version released by Sam has promoted the

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<sup>284</sup> For instance, "I have been listening to old songs for years. Compared with the original *Sitting Down Here*, I prefer the cover version, which has been endowed with a unique flavour by Leung's lyrics." and "Playing some old songs of Sandy Lam on my car CD player and listening to '*Wo zuozai zheli*' covered by her, I cannot help but admire Leung's amazing lyrics" are two comments made by Sina Weibo users.

<sup>285</sup> "Excuse me, which English song is covered by Sandy Lam as '*Wo zuozai zheli*'?", "Who sings the English version of '*Wo zuozai zheli*' and "Is that the case that there exists an English version of Sandy Lam's *Wo zuozai zheli*" are some examples. They can be respectively found at [http://zhidao.baidu.com/link?url=dtI4aopMuMIZQMJWT5P-WljmsKli8eaW0qgCE0Dg5Oj4UVDTTVt7vagQjCijtlTKpuVv\\_GxV8JTM05bpMP9n5\\_](http://zhidao.baidu.com/link?url=dtI4aopMuMIZQMJWT5P-WljmsKli8eaW0qgCE0Dg5Oj4UVDTTVt7vagQjCijtlTKpuVv_GxV8JTM05bpMP9n5_), [http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/12069361.html?loc\\_ans=46273027](http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/12069361.html?loc_ans=46273027), and <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/127106657.html?fr=iks&word=%CE%D2%D7%F8%D4%DA%D5%E2%C0%EF&ie=gbk> (last accessed 22 April 2015).

awareness of the Norwegian singer and her songs among the Chinese listeners.

Table 7.3 Chinese Lyrics for *Wo zuozai zheli* and English Back-translation

Chinese lyrics(in part)	English back-translation
我坐在这里 看着时间溜过	[I'm sitting down here, watching the time slipping away]
我怕我会爱上了这个角落	[I'm afraid I'll fall in love with this corner]
是它看着我的日子到底怎么样 过	[as it always notices me how I spend my days]
人来人往的出没	[Here is bustlingly packed with people all the time]
有什么样的轮廓	[What do they look like?]
老房子若有话说 它说什么	[If the old house could speak, what would it say to me?]
有谁和谁的身影 影响过我什 么	[Are there any silhouettes having an impact on me?]
有谁含情脉脉让我惊心动魄	[Is there anyone gazing at me affectionately, making me feel thrilled]
窗口长了眼睛说不定拍下来拿 去广播	[If the windows had eyes, they might take pictures of it for broadcasting]
<b>Refrain</b>	
我坐在这里看着时间溜过	[I'm sitting down here watching the time slipping away]
我的心会不会在这里停泊	[I wonder if this is the place where my heart lies]
站在这里会不会立地成佛	[Whether standing here will make me attain Buddhist salvation ]
躺在这里会否夜长梦多	[Whether lying here will cause something unexpected ]

我坐在这里会否开花结果	[Whether sitting down here will enable me to achieve my goals ]
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It is interesting to note that as more and more people hear about the English song, demands for the Chinese meaning of the original English lyrics have been generated subsequently. That's why Baidu Knows has witnessed successively different translations of the song. For instance, Figure 7.12 shows one related post in 2006 in which the person needed the English lyrics and corresponding Chinese translation. As usual, the given answer provides the literal meaning of the English lyrics but sometimes a too literal translation can be imprecise. Take the lines "I've got to pay the price" and "I'm telling just a couple" to illustrate. They have been translated word for word into 我不得不付钱 [I've gotta pay the money] and 我只是在跟一对朋友说话 [I'm just speaking with a pair of friends], which deviate from the original to some extent.

Later, the MV of *Sitting Down Here* has also been subtitled into Chinese with different amateur subtitling groups uploading their versions onto video streaming websites. As can be seen in Figure 7.13, five videos with different subtitles can be found at Yinyuetai with the earliest one available in 2011.<sup>286</sup> A brief comparison of the original lyrics and the subtitles of the earliest video, which is also the most viewed one,<sup>287</sup> will be given in Table 7.4. The subtitles of the selected video have used the Verdana font and white colour, and the simplicity works well.

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<sup>286</sup> All together there are 5 subtitled music videos for the song on the website, which can be accessed at <http://so.Yinyuetai/mv?keyword=sitting+down+here> (last accessed 26 April 2015).

<sup>287</sup> The most viewed video can be watched at <http://v.Yinyuetai/video/255935> (last accessed 26 April 2015).



Figure 7.12 Screenshot of A Question about *Sitting Down Here*<sup>288</sup>

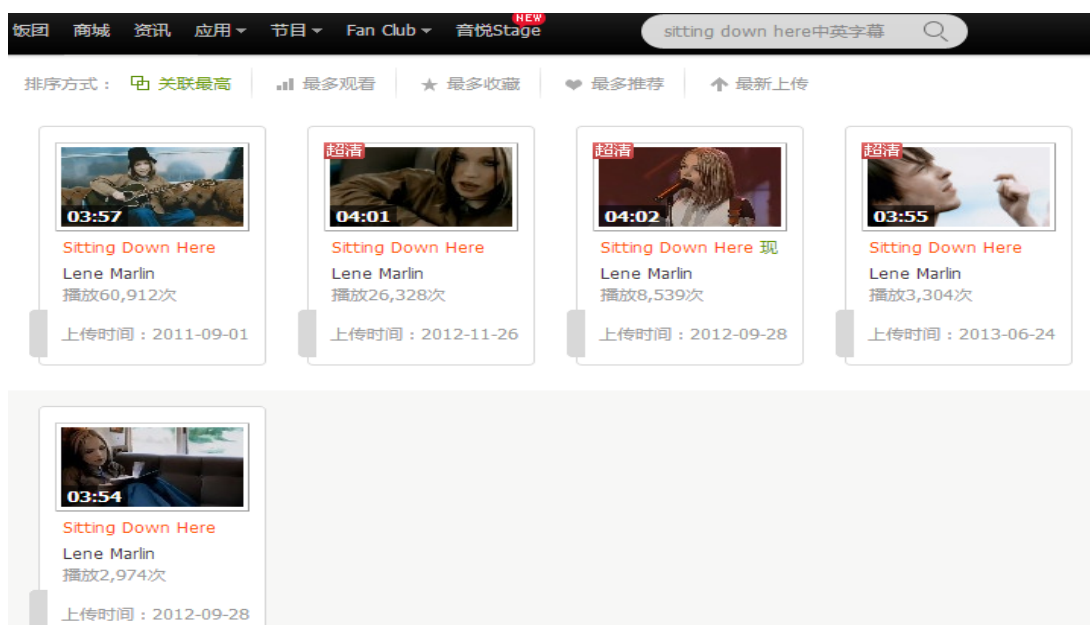


Figure 7.13 Screenshot of Subtitled MVs for *Sitting Down Here*

Table 7.4 A Comparison of the Original Lyrics and Fan-made Chinese Subtitles

English lyrics	Chinese subtitles and Back-translation
I'm sitting down here but hey	我一直坐在这里 你却对我视而不见

<sup>288</sup> The post is available at

<http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/10450770.html?fr=iks&word=sitting+down+here%B7%AD%D2%EB&ie=gbk> (last accessed 26 April 2015).



you can't see me	[I have been sitting here all the time, but you completely ignored me]
Your words cut deeply	你的言语深深伤了我 [I am hurt by your words]
they're just some other lies	那都是些谎言 [Those are lies]
I'm hiding from a distance	我躲在远处 [I am hiding in the distance]
I've got to pay the price	但我必须付出代价 [But I must pay the price]
Defending all against it	保护自己不受伤害 [Protecting myself from any hurts]
I really don't know why	我真的是不知为何 [I really don't know why]
You're obsessed with all my secrets,	你一直着迷我所有的秘密 [You're obsessed with all my secrets]
You always make me cry	却总是让我伤心流泪 [But you always hurt me and make my cry]
You seem to wanna hurt me	你似乎伤害到我 [It seems that you have hurt me]
No matter what I do	无论我做了什么 [No matter what I do]
I'm telling just a couple but somehow it gets to you	我只是说了一些话 但不知为何会触及到你 I only said something but I don't know why it influences you

Again, inexact or inappropriate renditions have been found in the subtitles. For example, “but hey you can't see me” in the opening line has been translated into “你却对我视而不见” [but you completely ignore me], which is remarkably different from the English lyrics. Similarly, “you seem to wanna hurt me” has been translated into “你似乎伤害到我” [it seems that you have hurt me]. Neither is “我只是说了一些话, 但不知为何会触及到你” [I only said something but I don't know why it influences you] the correct representation of “I'm telling just a couple but somehow

it gets to you” in Chinese.

All these examples have shown that Xue, online amateur translators and Leung do not always translate the same song. Even if dealing with the same song, it has been noted that they have different ways of translating the song.

### **7.3 Issues of Power, Patronage and Authority in the Field of Song Translation**

In Section 7.2, a comparative analysis of the variation in the original and target songs is presented. This section will go beyond the song materials and situate them in a broader context to find out why they are produced in a certain way. It is hoped that socio-cultural factors influencing the production, circulation and reception of song translations in China can be teased out.

#### **7.3.1 The Waning Popularity of Xue’s Translated Songs**

For the 81-year-old Xue as of March 2015, his practice of translating foreign songs into Chinese much predated that of professional lyricists and amateurs. This, to some degree, contributed to his earlier acquired prestige and fame in the field of song translation. However, this does not mean that Xue enjoyed total hegemony in his time. Songs have been translated by others as well (such as *Do-Re-Mi* as seen in Chapter 4), and sometimes Xue’s versions have been less popular. Such rivalry for recognition and acceptance amongst different agents constitutes a certain field dynamic, which does not allow Xue to hold an advantageous and dominant position all the time.

It is a fact that some music events and concerts featuring Xue’s translated songs have been held sporadically in recent years. For instance, a concert celebrating Xue’s 60 years of translating songs was held in Shanghai in October 2013 with the joint support of Shanghai Federation of Literary and Arts Circles, Shanghai Musician Association and Shanghai Music Publishing House.<sup>289</sup> Such institutional support and

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<sup>289</sup> Related report can be read at [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=332](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=332) (last accessed 29

sponsorship lend credence to Xue's position of relatively high-status and authority in song translation. Nevertheless, his accrued symbolic capital after years of work does not translate into a continuous defining force in the field. This is especially the case as he is currently situated within a larger hierarchical structure since lyricists and amateurs have subsequently become involved in the field. As commented by the older generation of listeners and Soviet music lovers, Xue's translated songs can invoke nostalgia of the past and evoke fond personal memories.<sup>290</sup> In other words, the previous generation of listeners who are familiar with Xue's translated songs still constitutes his steady fan base. However, except for some of his representative works such as *Mosike jiaowai de wanshang*, few young people are aware of his other works.

This could have been caused by several reasons. For example, a large portion of Xue's translated songs are released in the form of books, which have less exposure than other media forms such as radio airplay and TV performance. As Eckstein suggests, lyrics "cannot be conceived outside of the context of their vocal (and musical) actualisation – i.e. their performance" (2010: 10). In this light, when a song is 'published' in a printed form, which is not the common way music is listened to, listeners have different sensory experiences as opposed to when it is embodied in a sound recording or MV. Even though Xue's translated songs have been created with singability in mind, audiences who have no prior musical knowledge or cannot read musical scores may still find the lyrics similar to the words of printed poems or books. Hence, Xue's song translations in the form of print media are less effective in reaching a broad spectrum of audiences.

Another important factor is the differences between Xue and today's young audiences in terms of preference and taste. As can be seen previously, Russian folk

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March 2015).

<sup>290</sup> Related messages can be seen at [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=277](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=277) and [http://www.xuefan.net/news\\_detail.asp?id=269](http://www.xuefan.net/news_detail.asp?id=269) (last accessed 29 March 2015).

tunes, patriotic or revolutionary songs and foreign movie soundtracks constitute a major portion of Xue's translated works, which has to do with his aesthetic dispositions as well as the external ruling Party's ideological control. After all, as indicated by Hamm (1991), almost no contemporary foreign popular music was available in China until the late 1970s. Concurrently, the previously promoted Communist mass songs gradually failed to rouse and maintain the enthusiasm of many Chinese listeners after the early 1980s. This is because with China gradually shifting to a market economy and opening itself to the outside world since the late 1970s, more foreign cultural products have been flowing into China, giving Chinese people more options of foreign songs. In a similar vein, Baranovitch (2003) suggests that the state control of cultural production and dissemination, though not entirely absent since then, has become comparatively liberalised and looser than it had been in the revolutionary period.

We have seen that Xue and today's foreign music listeners have different musical tastes. Taste, according to Bourdieu, "functions as a sort of social orientation, a 'sense of one's place,' guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position" (1984: 466). This indicates that one's taste reflect his or her social position and cultural background. In terms of listening to music, an individual's musical choices are not random, which correlate with one's social background. Habitus is "a system of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action" (Bourdieu & Passerson 1977: 40). Viewed in this light, both taste and habitus are embodied social structures. A further point made here is that one's dispositions acquired during socialisation are constantly shaping and framing an individual's thoughts and behaviours, inclusive of aesthetic criteria and musical preferences.

Prior to the year when the Communists established the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the early 1950s, the Sino-Soviet alliance acted as a catalyst for the

Chinese people to be enthusiastic about learning from the former Soviet Union (Kaple 2015). Thus, Xue spent the time up to his early adulthood in a period when China had strong ties with the former Soviet Union. Xue's Soviet cultural inclination is therefore historically conditioned, which, in turn, oriented him towards earnestly introducing and translating many Russian songs into Chinese. For a certain period of time, rather than stick to Russian songs, Xue shifted to mass songs from other countries and American folk songs. This correlated strongly with the escalating tensions between China and the Soviet Union until the two countries gradually normalised their bilateral relations in the late 1980s. To some degree, Xue's practice of translating songs entails some ideological articulation. In contrast, the ideological control through cultural products in China has slackened since the 1980s. According to Moskowitz (2009), at around the same time, contemporary commercialised Mandarin pop music started to appear in China, and such music has been influenced by the market mechanism. In tandem with the growth of a commercial music industry, globalisation has sped up dramatically in the past several decades by virtue of the advancement of digital media and information technologies. It is worth noting that with America being a global super power in the post-Soviet era, America seems to have dominated the world markets for popular culture (Kraidy 2002; Crothers 2006), including music. The same is true for China, where the American and Anglo-European culture and influence have become increasingly pervasive. The country has also witnessed the penetration of Japanese cultural products since the early 1990s (Iwabuchi 1998). In addition, with the popularity of Korean drama, many Korean pop songs have gained a following in China since the late 1990s. There has even been the development of some radio stations that broadcast special programmes for Korean pop music (Jang 2012). Therefore, the previous preeminence of Sino-Russian cultural contacts gradually gave way to a diversification of foreign songs. As Prior suggests, people "tend to specify clear preferences for particular music genres" and "do so passionately and in mutually exclusive ways" (2013: 181).

That is to say, music preferences can be defined as much by dislikes as likes. It has been shown previously that English, Korean and Japanese pop songs are widely favoured by today's young audiences. Hence, the fact that some young people dislike the Russian songs might not be all that surprising. In short, in present-day China, music listeners are advantaged in accessing various types of songs and building cultural capital according to their preferences.

If we look back at Xue's song translation practice, singability is an important yardstick for defining a successful song translation. However, not many foreign music lovers respond enthusiastically to his singable translated songs today. Besides the aforementioned reason that a major part of Xue's translated works are not pop songs, this could also be attributed to the fact that today's music fans are more inclined to listen to foreign songs sung by their favourite singers in their original language.

To be more specific, as Bourdieu posits, "it may be assumed that every individual owes to the type of schooling he has received a set of basic, deeply interiorised master patterns....."(1971: 192-193). In other words, schooling plays a pivotal role in shaping one's values and perspectives. With more and more people all over the world turning to English as the main means of communication in this globalisation era, great importance has also been attached to learning English in China with the subject being taught from kindergarten through secondary and college education. As for the early English immersion in pre-school education, Ling Zi 凌孜, the Deputy Chairman of Chinese Confucian Academy and a Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference member, submitted a proposal to the 2012 annual conference. The proposal sought to ban English classes and other foreign languages in Chinese kindergartens in order to focus on studying Chinese language and culture.<sup>291</sup> This exemplifies that English has been collectively deemed an important

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<sup>291</sup> More information is available at

[http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-03/21/content\\_14877138.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-03/21/content_14877138.htm) and <http://edu.qq.com/a/20120307/000071.htm> (both last accessed 23 April 2015).

skill in the country and thus occupies a central position in the national curriculum. As noted, Chinese students often listen to English songs and watch English movies as a tool to enhance their English learning (Shen 2009; Wang et al. 2010). Likewise, China's universities currently offer a wide range of full degree programmes in foreign languages, such as Japanese, French, German and Hispanic Studies.

Through exploring the work of Bourdieu it could be claimed that educational experiences play a large part in shaping an individual's behaviour and cultural tastes. With better foreign language competence, the younger generation of Chinese people can not only appreciate but also sing foreign songs in their original. This can be evidenced by the fact that some participants of singing contests and talent shows in mainland China chose English and other foreign songs for their auditions, such as 'Super Girl' by Hunan Satellite Television and 'the Voice of China' by Zhejiang Television, to name just a few.<sup>292</sup> It has to be pointed out, however, that the number of people who are capable of doing this is limited. If music lovers want to comprehend the text, a literal translation of lyrics or subtitles will suffice. This further reinforces the audiences' disinterest and need for song translations which can be sung in Chinese, as a result of which, Xue's many translated songs have gradually receded from the spotlight.

### 7.3.2 The Proliferation of Foreign Language Pop Covers

As described previously, composing Cantonese or Mandarin lyrics to be set to existing foreign melodies has become a common way of enriching the musical repertoire in the contemporary music industry. This is particularly true of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Like *My Heart Will Go On*, some songs chosen to be covered in

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<sup>292</sup> The videos of contestant Zhang Liangying 张靓颖 singing Minnie Riperton's *Lovin' You* (1975) in the 2005 Super Girl Competition and Wu Mochou 吴莫愁 singing Jessie J's *Price Tag* (2011) in the first season of the Voice of China can be viewed respectively at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50MjJsqx6DA> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkWVIJlaBuM> (both last accessed 12 June 2015). Both singers rose to fame after the competition.

Mandarin or Cantonese are already well-known in the source culture and even in the target culture. The popularity of the foreign singers or the songs, which can be deemed as including a high amount of cultural or symbolic capital in the Bourdieusian sense, acts as the major incentive for the selection. It is worth mentioning here that sometimes the more famous the foreign song is, the more likely listeners are able to notice that the melody of the Chinese cover originates somewhere else. Although listeners might develop a preference for the version that they hear first, as we have seen in regards to the mixed response towards the Chinese version of *My Heart Will Go On*, the recontextualisation is able to give the old song a new feel and marketability. Sometimes, the incentive to cover a foreign song lies in the Chinese singer's fondness of the original singer or song as a way of paying homage to the latter. For instance, as pointed out by Mitchell (2006: 220), Faye Wong's covering of several songs by the Scottish band Cocteau Twins is driven by her admiration of the band.<sup>293</sup> If the covered song is lesser known in China, the prestige and personal charisma of the Chinese singer can make the song popular and even function as a bridge between the Chinese listeners and the foreign singer.

Take the Cranberries for instance, the Irish rock band has been known around the world, but it is through Faye Wong's cover of their hit single *Dreams* (1992) that more Chinese people started listening and following them.<sup>294</sup> During an email interview with Kang (2011) prior to their 2011 concert in China, when asked whether they had listened to Wong's Chinese cover of *Dreams*, the guitarist of the band Noel Hogan gave the following answer:

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<sup>293</sup> The band's songs *Bluebeard* (1993), *Know Who You Are At Every Age* (1993) and *Rilkean Heart* (1995) have been covered by Wong in either Cantonese or Mandarin into *Husi luanxiang* 胡思乱想 [Random thoughts] (1994), *Zhiji zhibi* 知己知彼 [Know oneself and know your enemy] (1994) and *Huainian* 怀念 [Reminiscence](1997) respectively.

<sup>294</sup> This can be evidenced by two posts in Baidu Tieba <http://tieba.baidu.com/p/2788257925> and Tianya BBS <http://bbs.tianya.cn/post-music-48878-1.shtml> (last accessed 30 April 2015). One writes "I didn't know the Cranberries until today. I think Faye's cover *Mengzhong ren* 梦中人 [The Person in the Dream] is even better than the original", whilst the other reads "I also love the Cranberries, and mainly because of Faye Wong, I decided to listen to their songs".



Yes, very impressive. Although I cannot understand what she is singing, her vocals are very similar to the way Dolores (the lead singer of the band) sings. It has been a pleasure to have such an influential singer to help us draw more audiences in China. No matter what others say, it is a great honour for us.<sup>295</sup>

Moreover, as we have seen in the song examples *Budebu ai* and *Wo zuozai zheli* analysed in previous chapters, it is the cover songs that promote Chinese listeners' awareness of the foreign songs as are alluded to. A fairly similar story can be found in the music scene of Hong Kong, where its use of cover versions greatly stimulated the inflow of Japanese popular music in the 1980s and 1990s. As observed by Ogawa, most Hong Kong listeners to Japanese songs first listened to the Cantonese cover versions in that "it was only later that they became interested in the original versions and singers" (2004: 152). From this perspective, the adoption of foreign melodies can be a two-way and reciprocal process. For one thing, cover songs play an essential role in providing a quick supply of music with imported and appropriated foreign melodies. For another thing, foreign singers may find it easier to tap into the local Chinese market by virtue of the connection between their songs and the local cover versions. After all, some listeners are intrigued to find out the originals of cover songs.

Of particular interest here is writing lyrics to set to the appropriated foreign melodies. Lyricists do not necessarily give up the original text entirely, but may use a combination of their own original words and partial translation. Under such circumstances, the target lyrics bear some resemblance to the original and the target song is entangled in an ambiguous position as to who retains the right of authorship. To put it another way, the borderline between translation and writing lyrics gets

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<sup>295</sup> The report by Kang can be read at <http://www.bjnews.com.cn/ent/2011/07/20/137809.html> (last accessed 2 May 2015).

blurred when the lyricist partially follows the original closely and then combines the translations when writing new words for a foreign tune.

When choosing a well-known foreign song and distributing it to different markets in local languages, record companies usually label the cover song as the corresponding locally produced version. Such a formal act of bestowing an official title to the cover song exerts a symbolic effect and helps to establish an equal relation between the foreign song and the Chinese song. In many cases, the foreign origin tends to be obscured under a local appropriation. It may be much later that Chinese listeners come to know that the melodies of some Chinese songs are actually taken from foreign songs. This may be related to that when the singers are not the songwriters themselves, they are usually more foregrounded than the composers and lyricists. Hence, for some cover songs, listeners may not notice the credit to foreign composers and the translator, simply assuming them as original Chinese songs.

In this context, I also find the concept of ‘official naming’ particularly useful, by which Bourdieu refers to “a symbolic act of imposition which has on its side all the strength of the collective, of the consensus, of common sense, because it is performed by a delegated agent of the state, the holder of the *monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence*” (1991: 239, original emphasis). Here, we find that both the producers and receivers of pop music play a critical role in endowing the Chinese cover song with a status on a par with that of the original. For one thing, the decisive power in the music business resides in the record labels, whose declaration and marketing helps to give the cover versions an identity equivalent to the original. Additionally, the same melody (with occasional variation) generates a subjective presumption on the part of listeners that the two songs are related to each other. To put it differently, the song might become more a question of recognition rather than comprehension. Such taken-for-granted assumptions and acceptance of cover songs as the Chinese versions of the foreign songs echoes Hermans’ (2007: 6) perspective of viewing equivalence as “equality in value and status”.

In this regard, whether it is for tapping into the global music market as a result

of a song's early success or meeting the increasing need for new songs with imported melodies, the priority for music companies is to produce a successful song with commercial value in the TL rather than retaining the original lyrics. From the perspective of listeners, as Moskowitz (2010: 49) indicates, most Mandopop fans are less concerned with "authenticity" than whether they can relate to the song.

This corresponds with the opinions of many music fans on online forums, who readily accept Chinese singers covering foreign songs provided that the songs are pleasant to the ear. The commercial success of the songs created in this way in the market provides a further boost to the practice of musical borrowings. Against such backdrop, what a lyricist needs to do is to write words that fit musical compositions and evoke emotional responses. In other words, knowing how to interpret the style, tone and mood of a piece of music and write words to match the music and even the singer's image is the very essential capital enabling any lyricist to secure a favourable position within the field. In Leung's case, we have seen that it took him several years of effort to accumulate sufficient capital and establish his reputation within the music industry. Leung's songs have been popular within the Mandarin-speaking world, this, does not, however, necessarily mean that he can secure all the commissions for writing songs. Take *My Heart Will Go On* for instance, the lyrics of its Mandarin and Cantonese version are written by Chen Daoming and Li Min respectively. This again substantiates Bourdieu's point that a field is an arena of struggle and contests for the specific capital valued by the field.

It is a fact that lyricists cannot write lyrics freely and often have to revise the written words to accommodate requirements of producers, publishers and singers. Nevertheless, compared with either translators or music fans, lyricists have more extensive links with the music industry and enjoy the privilege of licensed use of foreign music when commissioned to write lyrics. It has to be noted that once lyricists finish their writing, they normally have the written songs recorded by other artists, which constitute the work's additional artistic value and aesthetic pleasure.

This is because, in Eckstein's words (2010: 45), lyrics here bear two more layers of voices, i.e. "that of 'music' in the widest sense and the actual, 'embodied' voice of the performer". Put differently, the song text embodied in a sound recording is endowed with the vitality and emotion of a singing voice, enabling the song to reach more listeners. Sometimes, the Chinese singer's fame and the lyricist's authorship of the words can enhance the song's popularity. It is, hence, fair to say that the prevalence of foreign language pop covers in the Chinese music scene is inseparable from the support of record companies, the symbolic capital of singers as well as the cultural capital objectified in the foreign music and target lyrics.

### 7.3.3 The Emerging Power of Amateur Song Translators

According to Jones (1992: 8), radio, television, film and recordings played a seminal role in disseminating music to the Chinese people. However, one recent marked change is that the Internet has become an increasingly important platform for music listening, especially for teenagers and young adults who are growing up with more advanced technology. As revealed by Sabbah (1985: 219) in the following message concerning the development of media and communication:

In sum, the new media determine a segmented, differentiated audience that, although massive in terms of numbers, is no longer a mass audience in terms of simultaneity and uniformity of the message it receives. The new media are no longer mass media in the traditional sense of sending a limited number of messages to a homogeneous mass audience. Because of the multiplicity of messages and sources, the audience itself becomes more selective.

Audiences are no longer passive as in the previous unidirectional flow of information. As noted, like-minded fans have formed different virtual communities,

where they articulate their interest and enthusiastically share the foreign music they like. These virtual social networks select, translate or subtitle foreign songs and thus have emerged as new actors in the song translation field. In this sense, the development of the Internet has acted as a catalyst for the phenomenon of consumers turning into producers. As mentioned previously, the 'video turn' took place in the music industry around 2008. That's why subtitled MVs first emerged on the Internet several years later than the merely literal translations of lyrics. In either case, the openness of the field has been greatly enhanced by the non-professional engagement as everyone is welcome to participate. However, the field still exerts certain limits on the entry of newcomers. Only those with motivations, willingness, technical skills, and different cultural capital specific to each site are found to engage in song translation with their contribution.

An important distinguishing factor between translators, lyricists and amateur groups is that neither translators nor lyricists can decide what songs to introduce to Chinese people. Rather, foreign songs were selected to be translated because they fit well with the political climate or norms strongly upheld by the society, as well as for their commercial success in other cultures. In contrast, amateur translators have more leeway in choosing song materials according to their own tastes. Nevertheless, their autonomy gets limited by the potential copyright infringement and online content filtering mechanism.

One further difference between translators, amateur groups and lyricists examined previously lies in their ways of dealing with separate components of a song. Given a song's multimodal nature, it is hard to attend to all its modes of communication. Amateur translators treat song lyrics as literary texts independent of a musical setting. Hence, they focus on the words and normally take a traditional linguistic approach concentrating primarily on textual equivalence. In contrast, for Xue, the lyrics and music of a song have to be appreciated as a whole. Accordingly, the interpretation of a song involves more than reproducing its verbal content as extra

attention needs to be paid to factors such as melody, harmony, pitch and tempo. For Leung, musical constraints have to be taken into consideration, as well. However, how to write lyrics as a basis of a successful song takes precedence over the semantic closeness to the source lyrics. Processing information encoded in different modes is reasonably demanding than that conveyed by a single mode. For this reason, both Xue and Leung have sought to enhance their musical literacy through self-learning and practice. Admittedly, musical knowledge is an advantage to process the lyrics but not always necessary for any agent who wishes to get involved in song translation. Amateurs can be said to have lower volumes of cultural capital in dealing with the musical aspect of song translation. However, they are able to source foreign music from various places and promptly produce translations of foreign songs upon request. When fans work together, their pooled wisdom and accumulated information about the foreign songs can be counted as a valuable cultural resource.

Moreover, as Holt indicates, “video extends the range of communication, adding another element of sensuous stimulation, information and entertainment” (2011: 52). With regard to fan-subtitled MVs, they are both aural and visual, thus offering listeners a more engaging sensory experience. Some videos also have special effects added by subtitlers, forming a unique objectified form of their cultural capital. From this perspective, amateur translators may acquire less knowledge of music or lack academic credentials and qualifications. Their technological dexterity, together with the direct and effective interaction among themselves, however, can be deemed as their own distinctive strengths.

On the one hand, clearly aware of their unprofessional identity, amateur translators rarely consider themselves an expert in the field occupying a position of authority and thus solicit tolerance for their translation mistakes. On the other hand, the majority of the audiences correspondingly tailor their expectations of fan-made translations, offering support and understanding to the layman. Cronin’s comments on web-based machine translation services might shed light on this, as “what is

significant is not their unreliability but their availability” (2003: 22). Foreign songs have been an important source of entertainment for Chinese people. The proliferation of foreign songs in recent years has failed to be matched by the growth in the availability of translations. It is a fact that not every song will be professionally translated or covered by a specific singer for official distribution, which requires much more human efforts and financial resources. Even if the audience demands for translations of some songs can be met in official media outlets, there can be a time lag before the audiences have access to the complete translation. Hence, despite the doubt cast on the accuracy and quality, amateur translations of foreign songs will continue to exist and grow in prominence by virtue of their immediate availability.

To recapitulate what has been discussed above, the position of an actor in the field of song translation depends not only on how he/she adapts to the field but also on his/her competition with all the other actors. Xue has obtained significant achievement and a consecrated status through his constant efforts. However, how to maintain this prestige in the long term depends upon whether his accrued symbolic capital can be transformed into other kinds of capital or not. With the country’s cultural production shifting from a state-funded mechanism into one with a strong commercial focus, Xue lacks the resources to gain copyrights for the foreign songs to be translated. For many of his newly translated works, there are no record labels or singers readily available to record and further distribute them. This substantially limits the reach and influence of Xue’s translated songs. The market-oriented music industry offers institutional patronage to lyricists, whose works can become part of the local repertoire relatively easily. Compared with the younger generation of music fans, Xue does not have the same level of technical prowess to fully utilise the potential of the new media environment. As a result, Xue’s previously-valued cultural capital seems to fail to earn him a currently advantageous position in the rivalry with amateur translators and lyricists.

## 7.4 Conclusion

As Laing (1990: 125) observes:

It is a commonplace that production and consumption are interdependent. Without production of material or cultural goods, there can be no consumption. Without a demand for, and consumption of, the use-values embodied in these goods, there is no impetus for continuing production.

The production and consumption of translated foreign songs are mutually constitutive. Words and music of a song exist in a symbiotic combination. Indeed, lyrics function as an important carrier of the meaning of a song, but lyrics of the same foreign song may not carry equal weight for translators, music fans and lyricists. How to translate and otherwise mediate foreign songs, as we have seen so far, is an issue of selection. For Xue, a song translator shall strive to retain the symbiotic construct as close as possible to the original, though this is often hard to achieve. Lyricists place greater weight on the music and freely handle the semantic content of the original words whilst music fans may only expect a more literal translation of the words. The relative importance given to the tunes and words by lyricists and amateur translators respectively resonates somewhat with the previously mentioned practice of “musicocentrism” and “logocentrism” (Gorlée 2005: 8). In other words, different agents at different times have different perceptions of what shall be retained or left out in the transfer process. Hence, we have found a variety of approaches to song translation. When it comes to the end of the communication process, we have seen that today’s consumers are more selective and decreasingly willing to accept whatever is available. The activity of song translation is thus influenced by laws of supply and demand.



## Chapter 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 Overview

This study set out to investigate song translation activities in China from both a microscopic and macroscopic perspective through drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Specifically, this research has incorporated three different but interrelated translation modes into the scope of song translation: lyrics translation, adaptation, and rewriting. Through a number of different Chinese songs and their originals and noting what has been lost as well as gained, I have sought to identify different translation strategies. Based upon the analysis of text-internal features of the song translations, I have further examined how song translation operates as a field where various agents deploy their own specific type of capital to compete with each other as well as the external influences on the field. Such a systematic and detailed investigation has provided us with insights into how translation agents have developed particular choices for song texts and what socio-cultural determinants have conditioned their decision-making processes. This chapter summarises the main points discussed in the previous chapters by revisiting the research questions and recapitulating how they have been addressed. The main contributions of this research, its limitations, and suggestions for future research work will also be discussed.

### 8.2 Research Questions Revisited

- (1) Considering the diverse song translational phenomena in China, could Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production provide us with analytical tools for studying and understanding song translation as a socially situated activity or *field*?

As discussed in Chapter 2, the justification for using Bourdieu's theoretical model mainly rests on the need to disentangle research on song translation from a traditionally dominant focus on faithfulness and direct equivalence. The array of

possibilities for the mediation of a song when it is oriented towards the Chinese culture and Chinese audiences calls for an explorative approach taking broader contextual issues into consideration. Bourdieu's sociology helps us to view translated songs in contexts in which they are produced and consumed, thereby facilitating a better understanding of the translation choices made by different agents. As elaborated in Section 2.5, any field is a space of constant conflicts and competitions, which is defined by specific stakes and interests. It is within the field and through habitus, one's embodied dispositions, that social agents establish and consolidate their positions through pursuing their own particular interests and deploying different forms of capital. Seen in this light, song translation has been conceptualised as a field, or a conglomerate of different subfields (each) with a distinctive set of positions and practices, specific types of capital, its own values and markers of achievement. The three cases selected from three subfields have been examined in depth. This is achieved through analysing their positions and other occupants in the subfields, as well as the different forms of capital at stake and the resultant tension between the agents involved in the field.

A key aspect of habitus is that it is a product of social structures and simultaneously a producer of practice. The process of field and habitus mutually shaping and reshaping each other, therefore, has proved useful for understanding translation as a relational activity. In other words, Bourdieu's framework has elucidated the practices of social agents which have structured the field of song translation as well as the way the field has formed these agents' behaviour and influenced their practices.

The translators' behaviour has been explored employing Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Habitus, which was expanded on in Section 2.5.1.2, can explain many things. Nevertheless, in practice, investigating the mental processes that occur when one translates a song has presented a methodological problem. By definition, habitus operates at an unconscious level. Given its abstract nature, I have conducted a

comparative analysis of songs, in which the habitus of different translation agents has actualised itself respectively.

Another crucial aspect of using Bourdieu's approach is that apart from analysing the field in question itself, links between the field and other fields have to be forged. Accordingly, in my study, a full understanding of the operations in the song translation field has been sought exploring its relationship with the fields of politics, mass media, and music industry through three case studies.

(2) Are songs being translated for comprehension or for performance, and why?

What kinds of translation strategies are observed in respective cases?

As shown in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, songs have been translated either for comprehension or for performance. On the one hand, translations are created to understand song texts, as we have seen in the case of amateur translations circulated amongst music fans on the Internet, which are not made for singing. In this case, only lyrics are selected and rendered into Chinese; this strategy tends to keep the meaning as close to the original as possible. This is not just because producing singable song translations is more demanding. Instead, lyrics translation allows listeners to have access to the content of the song produced in another linguistic context whilst hearing it in its original language. As the original soundtrack remains unaltered and lyrics function as a primary carrier of meaning in a song, the translation of lyrics is sufficient to meet the demands of those who seek a more authentic immersion experience. In terms of the translation strategies, literal translation which reflects the semantic meaning of the original lyrics is relatively common. The translation of lyrics can appear on its own (sometimes presented together with the original lyrics) or accompanied by visuals such as in subtitling for MVs or live performances. In the latter case, condensation and addition can be observed. As with condensation, it has been usually employed as a way of shortening the lyrics so as to fit the time and space constraints. Addition, in the form of

translator's notes and glosses, has been used to account for culture-bound elements.

On the other hand, there are songs translated for the stage or singing. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Xue incorporated some translation principles, which became part of his internalised translatorial habitus. His belief that the singability of the words is essential to a successful song translation also influenced his decision to always produce singable translations. When it comes to Leung working in a more commercial environment, his primary job is to write lyrics to be matched with music. This is because for the music industry, foreign songs are appropriated and intended to become part of the local repertoire. The lyrics accordingly need to be sung in the languages of the local people.

Admittedly, in extremely rare circumstances, a literal translation of the lyrics can be sung in the TL. However, in most instances, the translator is faced with a trade-off between the faithfulness of the lyrics and efforts to make the translation singable. In order to set the lyrics to music, translation, therefore, is not restricted to the textual dimension, and it is a task that deserves more attention with respect to melody, rhythm, and stress in music, rhyme and syllable count. In consideration of the word-music relations, adaptation and rewriting with creative manipulation of lyrics, rather than source bound translation methods, are commonly adopted strategies. Both Xue and Leung try to make their words compatible with the pre-existing music. However, Xue introduces changes to the meaning of the songs when it is necessitated by music constraints or the need to comply with mainstream expectation. During the process, the contextual meaning of a song can be acclimated to local culture through substitution. In comparison, as we have seen in Leung's lyrics, it tends to be a voluntary decision to discard or completely change the semantic meaning of the song texts so that the lyrics can be in sync with the music.

(3) What kinds of socio-cultural determinants condition the agents' textual behaviours? What kinds of capital do different agents bring to the field and how

does this capital allow them to operate in the field?

Through the three chosen cases, I have examined the relation of the field of song translation with neighbouring fields with special attention to their habitus. It was found that the three chosen cases had very different social trajectories and several socio-cultural determinants played a role in the constitution of agents' translatorial habitus and subsequently their textual behaviours. Song translation activities in China are found to be subject to the dictates of political situations and of the economy. The specific forms of capital required for upward mobility in the field of song translation has varied over time.

As was discussed in Chapter 4, during Xue's early translating career, cultural production was heavily regulated by the Chinese government due to restrictions over ideological orientation. Foreign songs were imported on a highly controlled basis. The support for the translation and promotion of foreign songs on the part of the government and state-owned publishing houses acted as a major source of patronage for Xue. It is therefore not surprising that his way of translating songs, in terms of both the selection of songs for translation and concrete translation strategies, were on the whole ideologically motivated during this period. At a time when most of the general public did not have sufficient knowledge of another language, Xue's language skills and specialised knowledge in song translation, together with his enthusiasm for the activity of translating itself, allowed him to enter the field. This embodied cultural capital was then transformed into symbolic capital through several successful translated songs and recognition by others, particularly when he accumulated a reputation as a master of song translation in China.

Chapter 5 showed that the emergence of amateur song translation practices on the Internet has gone hand in hand with the exponential development of information and communication technologies. The Internet has brought together people who possess different relevant resources and knowledge, rendering it a pool of collective endeavours. In this arena, certain capital forms, like professional credentials and

musical knowledge, are desirable but not essential, as we have seen in the case of amateur translators. Instead, all agents must have one thing in common and that is their passion for music. As mentioned earlier, most of the amateur translators tend to be primarily concerned with a literal representation of the meaning of the lyrics. This is partially constrained by their lack of capital to undertake the more demanding singable translation of songs. Nonetheless, their technical skills and familiarity with the expectations and needs of the audiences has greatly empowered them in acquiring source materials and sharing their finished products with fellow fans. It has been noted that active amateur translators have little doubt that what they are doing is worth pursuing and useful for others. With no economic incentives or less interference from political institutions, amateur translators can be said to have enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy. Admittedly, this autonomy is relative, because as can be observed in some of the examples already cited, their activities have been constrained by copyright issues.

As described in Chapter 6, Leung's way of manipulating foreign songs is not so much a process of encoding and decoding messages across languages with due attention to the issue of fidelity. This is because his role is to replace the source lyrics with new lyrics in Cantonese or Mandarin for the purpose of producing cover songs. The meaning of the original is thus relegated to a secondary position, as the focus is shifted to making best-selling songs. It is true that Leung has enjoyed a liberty not usually bestowed on translators in terms of textual transfer. However, in both the selection of songs to be rewritten and how to rewrite the lyrics, the decision-making power largely rests in the hands of record labels which are market-oriented. As with his capital, Leung's poetic sensibility and mastery of the Chinese language seems to have played a more important role than his foreign language competence.

- (4) Has the practice of translating songs changed over time and, if so, how has it changed? How can we account for this disparity of translation practice, or in

Bourdieu's sense, how is the configuration of the field of song translation influenced by agents' struggles over specific forms of capital?

In order to investigate whether the practice of translating songs has changed over time, I have incorporated a detailed analysis of their respective translated songs in my three case studies to reveal their textual behavioural regularities. It is evident from the song examples that there is not one consistent approach to translating songs. Neither is there one size-fits-all approach. It can be said that song translators have shown a decreased tendency to strike a proper balance between preserving the original theme and setting the translation to music. As implied in the discussion of findings to the second research question, it has always been Xue's aim to reproduce the original words and further blend them with music. For amateur translators, their focus appears to be only on the faithfulness of linguistic aspects of the words. As shown in Chapter 6, Leung uses a combination of original text production and occasional partial translation, which brings significant changes to the meaning of the lyrics.

The second half of this research question was answered through observing socio-cultural changes in both the social space and the subjectivity of the translation agents occupying the field of song translation.

With less presence, though not total absence, of political intention, song translation activities, like any other activities of cultural production, are increasingly influenced by economic constraints. Xue's low income already put him at a disadvantage and worse still, most of his translated songs have been either included in books or made available on his personal website. Singability is achieved in Xue's translation, but paradoxically, with no recordings of the songs available, many of Xue's translated songs have relatively limited impact on the general public. In addition, there has been a lack of congruence between Xue and today's music fans in terms of musical taste. Neither is his approach of directly translating foreign lyrics into Chinese and setting them to music favoured by today's music fans. As a result,

Xue's song translations have failed to attract attention from the younger generation of listeners. It can be argued that due to the disjuncture between Xue's habitus and the changes in the field, Xue's authority in determining the form of song translation has diminished and this has lost him his previously dominant position amongst growing competitive agents.

In comparison, amateur translators have been at the forefront of producing song translation activities in the digital era. Against the backdrop of increasing transnational flow of songs and insufficient translations officially provided by record companies, amateur translators have emerged and become a key intermediary with their pooled wisdom. To music fans, foreign songs consist of not only linguistic capital but also artistic capital. Therefore, for many amateur translators, engaging in translating songs has not only been an opportunity of improving language skills, but also a way of creating intimacy with their favourite singers and fellow fans. Accordingly, they tend to translate songs in a literal manner. Amateur translators are found to be more driven by social and symbolic capital whilst downplaying economic gains. For engaged translators, appreciation from other peers and fans for their voluntary work plays an important role in maintaining their enthusiasm. Given that the influx of foreign songs is unlikely to cease, the bottom-up efforts of amateurs will continue to shape the way in which foreign songs are translated and consumed in China.

Leung's authorial habitus and artistic disposition, as reflected in his attitude that "I'm a lyricist and not a translator", informed him to take up complete or partial rewritings. Working primarily for the music industry, the priority for Leung has been to write songs which can be well-received among listeners. Accordingly, the target listeners' tastes and preferences have to be taken into consideration.

In summary, a song has multiple elements, including music, words, performance, ideologies and values hidden in the song. Retaining certain elements whilst discarding others to convey and communicate is clearly selective based on the



interests of different agents. In other words, what is valued in the field of song translation is not fixed. Different translation agents may not always prioritise the same capital. What resources the field attaches importance to and the relative value of each agent's capital has an impact on the position-takings in the field of song translation. This constitutes the dynamics and changes of the field as we have observed.

### **8.3 Achievements and Implications**

This thesis adds to an emerging interest in research on the intersection between translation and music. Due to space and time considerations, what I have presented here is not an exhaustive analysis of all categories of song translations. Nevertheless, by focusing on three representative cases, I have endeavoured to draw a comprehensive and diverse picture that characterises and reflects different facets of song translation activities in the Greater China region. In particular, amateur translations of songs on the Internet and cover songs, which are relatively new developments in the mediation of musical texts, have rarely been examined in depth in TS. This thesis has therefore broadened the spectrum of research on song translation and raised awareness of different interconnections between translation and music. What we have covered so far suggests that foreign songs are not always rendered 'equivalently' into Chinese, as Chinese songs maintain varying degrees of proximity with their originals. This demonstrates the complexity of song translation as well as challenges the commonly held views around translation, such as notions of equivalence and authorship.

Regarding the different interpretive possibilities of a foreign song when it enters a new cultural context, it is hard to clearly distinguish a translated text from an adapted text, as well as an "adaptation" from an "appropriation" or "rewriting". They all entail the process of reorienting a song towards a group of new audiences. It is

therefore essential to adopt a more flexible stance towards song translation and related activities. This echoes Baker's observation that the definition of translation shall be expanded to "encompass a wide range of activities and products that do not necessarily involve an identifiable relationship with a discrete source text" (2014: 15). By highlighting the links and connections among these textual categories which all perform different functions, we can expand the remit of song translation so as to further our understanding of translation in its entirety. Beyond academia, this research has also helped to fill a crucial information gap amongst professional translators, singers and the music industry, in terms of what happens when songs travel across linguistic and cultural borders.

There is no research, to the best of my knowledge, that has applied Bourdieu's sociology to studying the translation of songs. Taking his sociological model as a theoretical framework for song translation in its larger social context has turned out to be successful. Bourdieu's ideas have allowed an examination of translated songs beyond the relationship between source and target texts by placing them in a network of social forces and determinants. As Bourdieu's pairing of field and habitus has addressed the absence of the role of human agents in other theoretical models of translation, the cultural and social nature of song translation activities in China has been elaborated. As current trends in TS have focused on Bourdieu's concepts, this thesis has expanded the applicability of the theory further in the discipline.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Future Research**

The present thesis has not been without its drawbacks. Limited by my restricted knowledge of music fundamentals, my analysis of the songs has so far remained primarily text-based. This emphasis on the linguistic dimension of a song stems from the attempt to establish a conceptual model for better measuring the relationship between the Chinese songs and their originals, given that the meaning contained in a song is dynamic. Furthermore, the primary focus of the current research is to

examine contextual issues such as the historical, economic and social constraints on song translation within a Bourdieusian framework. Due to space limitation, this study deals with only specific concerns and therefore fails to look closely at the interplay between different semiotic modes of a song. Having said that, although lyrics constitute a major mode of meaning-making in a song, other modes such as music and paralinguistic codes all operate simultaneously in shaping a song's broader meaning. In other words, this research further proves the need for taking an interdisciplinary and multimodal approach for analysing song texts. With regard to multimodal text analysis, Gambier (2006: 7) observes:

There is a strong paradox: we are ready to acknowledge the interrelations between the verbal and the visual, between language and non-verbal, but the dominant research perspective remains largely linguistic. The multisemiotic blends of many different signs are not ignored but they are usually neglected or not integrated into a framework.

It would therefore be favourable for future studies on song translation to attend more to the meaning-making dynamics of songs and integrate analysis of all other non-linguistic text constituents in a more detailed and systematic way. A multimodal approach will allow for a more rigorous analysis of the interaction between all the signifying codes of a song.

Also for practical reasons, I have focused on the translation of English songs as my foreign language skills restricts me from undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the transfer operations involving multiple language pairs. However, many foreign songs in a language other than English have been translated into Chinese. One could incorporate more Chinese songs translated from other languages by other translators or organisations and examine whether certain general tendencies or distinctive translation patterns can be found in different contexts with different agents and song

materials. In so doing, valuable new perspectives can be added to the present study.

Another potential area of exploration could be the reception and audio-visual cognitive processing by the audiences. We have touched upon listeners' opinions concerning some songs in previous discussions and implicitly suggested that audiences' needs and expectations cannot be overlooked. However, there have been very few empirical studies that systematically examine the reception of translated songs among end users so far. The reception process is thus worth investigating further. In the future, one can seek individual responses from actual receivers of the song translations concerning quality and the effects of different translations on the reception process. This can be done through questionnaires, focus groups or even cognitive tests. Such research will elicit enough feedback from the audiences and provide reliable data about their demands and preferences, thereby informing song translators of how to adjust strategies and better cater to the audience needs.

## **8.5 Concluding Remarks**

In summary, this thesis has systematically addressed the complicated interplay of music and translation which lies behind the activities of introducing foreign songs to Chinese audiences. I hope I have reached a more general goal: an investigation of music in its interface with translation. A song translator is faced with plural challenges, such as maintaining the semantic content of the source lyrics, matching the rhythm and reproducing the rhyme, as well as putting the right word on the right note. A descriptive analysis of the song examples has shown that different methods have been utilised to solve the problems. A sociological approach to song translation has helped to tie the description to explanation by situating the observed practices of translating songs within the wider socio-cultural contexts. Song translation activities under scrutiny have been shaped by different social, political, cultural and ideological forces throughout time. As a result, there has been considerable variation

in terms of the production and reception of translated songs. Nonetheless, foreign songs have gone beyond the language barrier and connected well with Chinese audiences. In light of this, translation can be said to have undoubtedly played a significant role in enabling songs to become a universal language.

Let me end this thesis by returning to the issue of whether translating songs is always necessary. Today, the proliferation of foreign songs, the multiple alternative ways of listening to music, changing audience tastes and needs all impinge upon the way a foreign song is interpreted and received among audiences. Hence, to translate songs or not is not only a question, but also an open-ended one. There is no single right answer. We can choose to translate (or not), adapt or rewrite lyrics. The choice, however, is not arbitrary. The best answer depends on the broader social context of the song translation and much more empirical work in this area is needed. Ultimately, this research is just a starting point for more fruitful interdisciplinary studies on translation and music.

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## Appendix 1: Baidu's Points Mechanism

**Table 1. Experience Points and Levels**

Action	Concrete Action & Experience Points	Limitations per Day	
Logging	First Log in (begin participating on Baidu Knows)	20	—
Answering	Have your answer selected as the best answer by the asker	20+extra points	—
	Have your answer voted as the best by viewers	10	—
	Answer promptly and accurately( provide answer within 15 minutes and the asker selects it as the best)	20	—
	Answer follow-up questions	2	50
	Have your answer to follow-up questions accepted by the asker	1	Level 1-5: 10 Level 6-10: 20 Level 11-20: 50
Site Honour	Chosen as 'Star of Knows'	5000	—
Receive a Violation	Have your question deleted	-20	—
	Have your answer deleted	-10	—
	Have your comment deleted	-5	—

**Table 2: Value Points and Levels**

Action	Concrete Action & Value Points	Limitations per Day
Logging	First Log in (begin participating on Baidu Knows)	20 —
Answering	Have your answer selected as the best answer by the asker	20+extra points —
	Have your answer voted as reference by viewers	10 —
	Have your answer voted as excellent answer	10 —
	Answer follow-up questions	2 50
	Answer promptly and accurately( provide answer within 15 minutes and the asker selects it as the best)	20 —
	Receive a ‘thumbs-up’ for your answer	1
Asking	Ask a question	-5 —
	Ask a question with extra points	-extra points —
	Ask a question anonymously	-10 —
	Ask follow-up questions	4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> : -5 ≥6 <sup>th</sup> : -10

	Choose a best answer for your question	5	—
	No best answer for your question	5	—
Site Honour	Chosen as ‘Star of Knows’	5000	—
Receive a Violation	Have your question deleted	−20	—
	Have your answer deleted	−10	—
	Have your comment deleted	−5	—

## Appendix 2: Some Cover Songs with Lyrics Written by Leung

Foreign Song Title	Release Date	Singer	Cover Song Title	Release Date	Singer
<i>Can't Take My Eyes Off You</i>	1967.05	Frankie Valli	<i>Can't Take My Eyes Off U</i>	2000.12	Leon Lai 黎明
小さな KISS [Little Kiss] <u>Japanese</u>	1988.08	EPO	<i>Mingnian jinye</i> 明年今夜 [The Same Night, Next Year]	1990.12	Faye Wong 王菲
<i>Superwoman</i>	1988.09	Karyn White	<i>Duodeta</i> 多得他 [Thanks to Him]	1990.12	Faye Wong
白い街 青い影 [White Street, Pale Shadow] <u>Japanese</u>	1988.12	EPO	<i>Wunai natian</i> 无奈那天 [I Felt Helpless That Day] <u>Cantonese</u>	1989.11	Faye Wong
ふたりの <i>Destiny</i> [You are the Only One] <u>Japanese</u>	1989.03	EPO	<i>Zhiyou ni</i> 只有你 [You are the Only One] <u>Cantonese</u>	1990.12	Faye Wong
矛盾の中で生きてる [We Live in Contradictions] <u>Japanese</u>	1989.07	EPO	<i>Buke duode</i> 不可多得[Rarity]	1995.03	Faye Wong
<i>Never Alone</i>	1989.07	EPO	<i>Ranhou moutian</i> 然后某天 [And Then One Day]	1990.12	Faye Wong
<i>Silent All These Years</i>	1991.11	Tori Amos	<i>Lengzhan</i> 冷战 [the Silent Treatment] <u>Cantonese</u>	1993.09	Faye Wong
<i>Know Who You Are At Every Age</i>	1993.11	Cocteau Twins	<i>Zhiji zhibi</i> 知己知彼 [know the enemy and know yourself] <u>Cantonese</u>	1994.06	Faye Wong
<i>Bluebeard</i>	1993.11	Cocteau Twins	<i>Husi luanxiang</i> 胡思乱想 [Random thoughts]	1994.06	Faye Wong

			<u>Cantonese</u>		
<i>Sitting Down Here</i>	1999.03	Lene Marlin	<i>Wo zuozai zheli</i> 我坐在这里 [I am sitting down here]	2000.01	Sandy Lam 林忆莲
<i>Carcashes</i>	2001.07	<i>Standfast</i>	<i>Tamen de gushi</i> 他们的故事 [Their Story]	2001.09	Valen Hsu 许茹芸
<i>사랑하고 싶어</i> [Wanna Fall in Love] <u>Korean</u>	2001.11	왁스 [Wax]	<i>My Love My Fate</i> <u>Cantonese</u>	2005.11	Janice Vidal 卫兰
<i>Double J</i> <u>Korean</u>	2001.12	이재진 [Lee JaeJin]	<i>Wode maikefeng</i> 我的麦克风 [My Microphone] <u>Mandarin</u>	2003.09	Wilber Pan 潘玮柏
<i>Going Home</i>	2002.01	Sophie Zelmani	<i>Huashile</i> 花事了 [Withered Flowers] <u>Cantonese</u>	2003.11	Faye Wong
<i>Going Home</i>	2002.01	Sophie Zelmani	Chengke 乘客 [Passenger] <u>Mandarin</u>	2003.11	Faye Wong
<i>Come On</i> <u>Korean</u>	2004	거북이 [Turtles]	<i>Kuaile chongbai</i> 快乐崇拜 [Worship of Happiness]	2005.12	Wilber Pan ft. Angela Chang 张韶涵
<i>Y(Please Tell Me Why)</i> <u>Korean</u>	2004.07	FreeStyle	<i>Budebu ai</i> 不得不爱 [I Can't Help but Love You]	2007.07	Wilber Pan
<i>Hate That I Love You</i>	2007.08	Rihanna ft. Ne-Yo	<i>Hate That I Love You</i> <u>Cantonese</u>	2008.07	Rihanna ft. Hins Cheung 张敬轩
<i>Hate That I Love You</i>	2007.08	Rihanna ft. Ne-Yo	<i>Hate That I Love You</i> <u>Mandarin</u>	2008.07	Rihanna ft. Hins Cheung

## Appendix 3: Some Song Translation Douban Groups<sup>298</sup>

### 1. Group Name: Translating Song Lyrics of Dark Metal Bands

<http://www.douban.com/group/darklyrics/>

Number of Members: 2,081

Established Date: 08/01/2010

Description:

With "Dark wave, Neo-Classical, Folk, Neo-folk, Dark-folk, Cold wave, Black Metal, Martial/Industrial" and some other music of black/dark themes (the original description by the group creator) included, there are many posts here which are worth reading. You can directly search or use the group index for the translation of your favourite lyrics.

### 2. Group Name: Translating Lyrics of Songs by the Rolling Stones

<http://www.douban.com/group/331825/>

Number of Members: 164

Established Date: 21/03/2011

Description:

Here is a link to another Douban group where you can watch a series of video performances of the Rolling Stones: <http://www.douban.com/group/topic/5240838/>

### 3. Group Name: Translating Japanese Song Lyrics

<http://www.douban.com/group/203084/>

Number of Members: 2,361

Established Date: 07/12/2009

Description (originally in Japanese):

The group is a platform for translating Japanese songs. And for better communication, please follow the following rules.

1. Title of the post should be in the format of 'song title'/ 'singer name'(released time)
2. Reposting or copying is not allowed;
3. If you are not the translator, please acknowledge the original translator in your post;

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<sup>298</sup> This Appendix is created based on the search results as of early March 2014.

4. Provide explanatory notes when necessary.
5. If there is mistranslation or illogical expression, please point it out directly.

OK, so much for the rules. Let's enjoy the beautiful Japanese lyrics and experience the unique love embedded in them together.

**4. Group Name: Lyrics Translation**

<http://www.douban.com/group/30382/>

Number of Members: 280

Established Date: 07/12/2009

Description:

The group is tentatively established to translate lyrics of English songs.

**5. Group Name: Frantic Translator of Lyrics**

<http://www.douban.com/group/lyric-frantic/>

Number of Members: 10

Established Date: 04/07/2009

Description:

Translate your favorite Chinese lyrics into foreign languages or vice versa. You have absolute freedom, we encourage original translation.

**6. Group Name: I Just Love Translating English Lyrics**

<http://www.douban.com/group/316625/>

Number of Members: 5 (the group creator even suspended his registration)

Established Date: 17/01/2010

Description:

Whoever likes translating English lyrics is wanted!

Elegant, funny, willful, all are welcome!

**7. Group Name: The Translation Project of English Lyrics**

<http://www.douban.com/group/299878/>

Number of Members: 174

Established Date: 10/11/2010

Description:

Still water runs deep, so translate a song each day!

**8. Group Name: Translating Lyrics of Foreign Songs**

<http://www.douban.com/group/411133/>

Number of Members: 1

Established Date: 19/06/2012

Description:

The reason for setting up the group is that we have too many foreign songs of various genres. However, due to limited command of foreign languages and historical background information, we may not be able to see the beauty of lyrics. Please contribute and share your own translation of foreign lyrics, and we can have a discussion.

**9. Group Name: Translating French and Spanish Songs**

<http://www.douban.com/group/385981/>

Number of Members: 2

Established Date: 31/01/2012

Description:

Our group is committed to providing Douban users with Chinese translations of French and Spanish songs, and organising music activities regularly.

We welcome like-minded friends to join us!

We hope you can find what interest you here.

**10. Group Name: The Base for Translating English Songs**

<http://www.douban.com/group/337510/>

Number of Members: 85

Established Date: 16/04/2011

Description:

Whoever visits our group must be English song lovers. Please share with us your favourite! By the way, I would like to promote my own DJ program here: Midnight Chicken-Soup Music Noodle.

**11. Group Name: Translating Foreign Songs**

<http://www.douban.com/group/58052/>

Number of Members: 9

Established Date: 01/09/2007

Description:

Choose one favourite foreign song, like the one which I am addicted to for its beautiful lyrics, and then translate it fully in Chinese. This offers dual happiness as



we can appreciate the beauty in two languages, why not? Once I have newly translated works, I will share with you guys but due to my lack of proficiency in other languages, I only focus on English songs.

I have to declare rules and regulations for the group, i.e. all the translations must be original. We say no to translations copied and pasted from somewhere else. For members who know little about translation, please visit us frequently to appreciate others' work. If you just like reposting other's post, please stay away from our group.

Whether you agree with me or not, please show respect for our rules.

Each day shines new for practice.

**Appendix 4: Lyrics of ‘系我心弦’ [Tied to My Heartstrings] (1998)  
and Its Back-translation**

Cantonese lyrics by Li Min	Back-translation
<b>Verse 1:</b>	
我每晚也梦见	Every night I also dream
伴在你的身边	that I am by your side
我每晚也梦到以前	I dream of the past days every night
爱侣隔这样远	lovers are so far from each other
你没法到终点	even if you cannot come to me
却有我挂念你百年	I will remember you for a hundred years
<b>Chorus:</b>	
爱恋凭一个信念	Being in love needs belief in love
似海深的爱梦里再现	The love as deep as the sea reemerges in the dream
变迁浮光于水面	The ups and downs of our life are
扭曲倒影太善变	as fickle as the reflections in the water
但夜里发出光线	But they emit light at night
<b>Verse 2:</b>	
我赞美这份爱	I extol this love
是耀眼的火钻	it is a dazzling diamond
跌进暗处伴那破船	falling into the darkness with the wreck
盼世界倒后转	I wish we could turn back the time
至遇上的当天	to the day we met
永远永远系我心弦	you will be tied to my heartstrings
<b>Chorus (repeated)</b>	forever