

A Study on Translation of Proper Nouns in the English Version of the 1986 TV Series *Journey to the West* from the Perspective of Transcreation

Gao Ziyin

School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Shandong University, Jinan, Shandong, China

Abstract: “Transcreation” is a combination of “translation” and “creation”, and refers to the process of translating a message into another language while preserving its original creative intent. In the era of economic globalization and cultural diversity, transcreation has been widely used and practiced in cross-language and cross-cultural translation activities such as video games, websites, audiovisual products, literature, etc. Scholars, domestic and abroad, have been paying increasing attention to the study of creative translation in recent years. The Chinese television series *Journey to the West*, which debuted in 1986, is a classic. This TV series has remained popular for decades and now settled into the collective memory of Chinese people. Its English translation was shown on the CCTV app in 2021, helping to spread the knowledge of *Journey to the West* among English-speaking audiences. Through the lens of transcreation, this essay aims to analyze the translation of proper names in the English version of the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West*. Additionally, it seeks to examine the potential motivations behind the translator(s)’s use of transcreation, as well as its expressive effects. The essay recognizes the shortcomings of the existing translation version and makes some recommendations for improvement. Meanwhile, based on the research findings, it puts forward feasible suggestions on English translation of proper names in films and television works on traditional Chinese culture in order to better promote the spread of traditional Chinese culture.

Keywords: Transcreation; 1986 TV Series *Journey to the West*; English Translation of Proper Nouns; English Translation of Traditional Chinese Culture

1. Introduction

“Transcreation” is a combination of “translation” and “creation”. (Huang 2013) Humphrey (2011) defines transcreation as “the translation of words, creative concepts and ideas without losing their cultural impact”. In recent years, research on transcreation has gain increasing popularity among scholars domestic and abroad. The study of transcreation has both theoretical and practical significance in that it broadens the definition of translation and transforms people's ideas about translation in addition to offering fresh approaches to cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practice. (Huang 2013) In the English translation of China’s TV series, transcreation is commonly used, where direct translation, paraphrasing or phonetic translation cannot properly convey the meaning of the words in a film or TV drama, so the translator(s) has to recreate these words in the context of the content, plot and style of the original work. The issue of untranslatability caused by linguistic and cultural differences as well as historical or cultural contexts can be resolved with the help of transcreation’s unique text reconstruction function(Guan 2020), making the translation better while retaining the core information of the source text.

Journey to the West, one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, is the first romantic full-length chapter-based novel of gods and demons in Chinese history, famous for its novel plot and vivid characters. The novel was originally adapted for the screen in the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West*. Despite its limited artistic and technical resources, the TV series creates a fantastical universe that captures the spirit of Tang Monk and his three disciples as they persevere through hardship and peril, conveying a rich cultural significance. This TV series has remained popular for decades with more than three thousand times of rebroadcast since it aired, brought childhood joy for

generations, and now settled into the collective memory of Chinese people. Its English translation was shown on the CCTV app in 2021 and attracted a lot of interest from viewers both domestically and abroad, with more than one million plays on CCTV and YouTube, helping to spread knowledge of *Journey to the West* among English-speaking audiences.

As a popular form of entertainment, TV dramas can be important for many people's leisure time and enjoyment. Meanwhile, it takes on the mission of cultural exchange and contributes significantly to it as one of the carriers of cultural transmission. (Wan 2020) In Chinese television series *Journey to the West*, proper names such as character names and object names are used frequently, often conveying cultural information and reflecting traditional Chinese culture. The appropriate translation of these terms in its English version can aid foreign audiences in better understanding the cultural connotation of the work, thus playing a role in promoting cultural exchange and dissemination. Also, it may help further the understanding of the issues with the English translation of TV dramas on traditional Chinese culture by investigating how proper nouns are translated in the English version of TV series *Journey to the West*.

China's film and television industries have developed rapidly in recent years, and some excellent Chinese TV dramas have made their way to the international market and won universal praise. *The Legend of Zhen Huan* debuted on Netflix in 2015, and in 2022 *A Lifelong Journey* was purchased by Disney for exclusive overseas broadcast rights as soon as the production began. In addition to gaining great popularity on YouTube platform, the 2021 hit TV series *Minning Town* also broadcast on continents such as Asia, Europe, and Africa. However, some academics have noted that part of the translation of Chinese movies and TV dramas is far from excellent. For instance, some of the movie titles have been translated inadequately, failing to convey the cultural significance of the original Chinese ones; Excessive deletion in *The Legend of Zhen Huan* brought regrettable cultural discount. It can be seen that the increasing popularity of Chinese movies and TV dramas around the world has proposed stricter criteria for their translation.

The present study investigates the translation of proper nouns in the English-version *Journey to*

the West TV series of 1986, and explores skills for the English translation of proper nouns in films and television works on traditional Chinese culture. By doing so, this thesis aims to serve as a reference for the rendering of Chinese culture into English, promote the dissemination of Chinese culture around the world, and to aid in its creative transformation and innovative development. Additionally, the existing studies of the English translation of *Journey to the West* have been primarily focused on the novel itself, with little spotlight cast upon the translation of related film and television works. Thus, this thesis holds significance in contributing to the development of research in this particular field.

The current thesis is structured as follows. Chapter One presents an introduction to the study, including the research background, purpose and significance, as well as the structure of the thesis. Chapter Two reviews the definition, and the status quo of application and development of transcreation in academia from different perspectives. Furthermore, domestic and foreign research on the English translation of *Journey to the West* and guidelines for translating proper nouns are also revisited in this section. Chapter Three functions as the body part of the thesis, categorizing into three major groups the proper nouns identified in the English-version subtitles of the 1986 *Journey to the West* TV series: character names (names of main characters, immortals, monsters and demons), appellations, event names and item names, and analyzes the translation techniques applied by translator(s) and the justifications from the perspective of creative translation. Chapter Four presents a discussion of the major findings and conclusions of the thesis, stating the limitations of the thesis and providing references for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Transcreation

Many scholars have interpreted, and expanded the concept of transcreation. The Indian poet and translator Lal defined transcreation as "Readable, not strictly faithful translation".(Kothari 2003) In *The Little Book of Transcreation* by Humphrey et al. (Louise 2011), transcreation was defined as "the translation of words, creative concepts and ideas without losing their cultural impact, essentially the expression of the same ideas in different words." Domestic

scholars have different translations of the term “transcreation”. For instance, “创造翻译” (Liang 2002), “创译” (Yang 2007), “译创”. The term “transcreation” refers to creative translation, which was divided into two categories: transcreation of words and of chapters, with the former producing new words and the latter creating literary translation.

The range of applications for transcreation has recently expanded, in that the study of this subject matter has grown both domestically and internationally, encompassing a wider range of disciplines and themes with greater depth. In the area of literary translation, Zhang(2021) investigated transcreation in the English translation of Chinese poetry, contending that its purpose is to be more faithful to the original poem and that its special textual reconstruction function can help resolve the untranslatability caused by cultural differences between the source and target languages. Katan (2016) suggested that transcreation can be used to solve the translator’s dilemma when cultural differences result in notions difficult to understand in literal translation. When studying transcreation in children’s literature translation, Wang (2022) stated that transcreation is about communicating not only effectively, but also affectively, establishing an emotional connection between the audience/customer and the message. The application of transcreation has also drawn significant attention in non-literary translation. For instance, Huang and Yin (2013) focused on several basic theoretical concerns of transcreation, such as its definition, origin, relationship with translation, and applications, which provided the foundation for future studies that will be closely related. Wang (2015) suggested that the goal of transcreation in game localization is to extract the essence of the original game and recreate it in another language in accordance with the cultural environment, so that the target players can experience a similar emotional impact as the native players; Mavis (2020) discussed transcreation in English marketing texts and argues that transcreation needs to be based on the context and specific language. At the same time, research on transcreation has also kept pace with the times. For example, Wang and Lu (2015) conducted a systematic study on the potential for the further development of transcreation with the globalization of economy and culture; Zhang

and Fan (2020) concentrated on the necessity and feasibility of applying transcreation to the English translation of diplomatic discourse. The above research focused mainly on transcreation theories and applications in discourse, paragraphs and sentences.

It can be seen that there is a wealth of extant research on transcreation both domestically and internationally. These achievements serve as a guide and a point of reference for transcreation research and practice in a variety of translation-related fields. This thesis provides a detailed analysis of transcreation, including its concept, definition, application, and expression effects, by reviewing current literature on the subject. Building on this foundation, the thesis explores the use of transcreation in the English translation of films and TV series, as well as the appropriateness of using this technique to translate the proper nouns in the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West*.

2.2 English Translation of Proper Nouns in the Novel *Journey to the West*

During the compilation of *The Chinese-English Encyclopedia Dictionary of Proper Names* (Zhao, 2008), the translation circle summarized and implemented the following eight principles of translation of Chinese names into English: translation adapting to international standards (author’s translation), national standards (author’s translation), industry standards (author’s translation), original names, phonosemantic translation (author’s translation), conventions, one translation for the same name (author’s translation), innovation (author’s translation). The application of these principles can promote the standardization of the translation of proper nouns. Scholars Li and He (2012) reanalyzed and redefined the translation principle of “translation adapting to original names” from the perspective of pragmatics. They contended that the idea of “translation for the target readers” should serve as the foundation for the translation of proper nouns, and five general rules are put forwarded to further illustrate the principle of “naming one thing after its originating person/place” in order to address the issue of translation transfer. The current study can draw on the findings of the above studies to analyze the translation proper nouns in *Journey to the West* TV series.

In the *Journey to the West*, proper nouns such as character names and object names appear in

large numbers, often loaded with cultural information. Exploring their cultural implications can deepen one's understanding of the work. Deng (2009) applied Newmark's translation criticism scheme to analyze Jenner's methods and techniques for translating character names in *Journey to the West*, including transliteration, functional equivalence, and customary translation. Based on this analysis, Deng presented various methods and techniques for translating character names in classical literature. From the perspective of translator behavior criticism theory, Lei (2022) investigated the translation of Buddhist terms in Jenner's version. Using the Text World Theory, Li (2014) classified proper names in *Journey to the West* from the perspective discourse world and discussed their English translations, proposing tactics and techniques for English translations of Chinese names. He suggested that the interlingual conversion of proper names should adhere to the expression conventions of the target language, with transliteration being the primary method, supplemented by other diverse methods such as free translation.

"A proper name is a specialized name indicating a person, country, place, institution, organization, trademark, historical event, cultural genre, etc." (Hu 2006); Tan (2002) classified proper nouns in *A Dream in Red Mansions* into character names, appellations, places and scenes; Lei (2021) classified proper nouns in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* as names of character, animals institutions and nouns related to witchcraft; Li (2014) classified the proper names in *Journey to the West* into seven categories: names of characters, places, objects, events, scenes, time, and terms. This essay builds on the study of proper nouns and cultural connotations in the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West*, classifying the proper nouns in the English translation into character name (names of main characters, gods, immortals, and demons), appellations, event names and item names.

To conclude, the study of transcreation has piqued significant interest among translation research scholars and has provided useful guidance for related research. However, current research has predominantly focused on translation strategies and skills pertaining to discourse, paragraphs, sentences, and vocabulary. Limited attention has been given to transcreation from the perspective of proper name translation. Thus, this study aims to analyze the translation

of proper names in the English version of the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West* through the lens of transcreation, considering cultural differences. Furthermore, current studies on the English translation of *Journey to the West* primarily focus on the novel, with few studies exploring the films and TV series adapted from the novel. Most of the research on this topic is excessive in Southeast Asian countries. Consequently, this project will concentrate on the 1986 English translation of the *Journey to the West* TV series, intending to provide a reference for future research in this domain.

Journey to the West, as the first romantic full-length chapter-based novel of gods and demons in the history of China, has long been known around the world. It is available in more than 60 English-language editions, including excerpts translated into English, English adaptations, and full English translations. The English translation and international dissemination of this work have long been a topic of interest for the domestic academic community, and extensive research has been conducted on the subject. In their 2009 study, Wu and Zhang (2022) conducted a comparative analysis of two English translations of *Journey to the West*—Yu Guofan's version and W.J.F. Jenner's version—from the perspectives of Newmark's semantic and communicative translation theories. They explored how the effective application of these strategies can serve as a theoretical framework for the translation of this novel. Zhu (2021) analyzed the translation of cultural information in the chapter titles of the novel in Yu and Jenner's versions and explored how the cultural backgrounds of the translators influenced the translation process. Yu's translation revealed a clear and intuitive interpretation of metaphorical phenomena through the use of native language, such as names of people and places. These studies can be used as a reference for further research on the English translation of *Journey to the West*, and for the translation and communication of other Chinese literary works in English. While the focus of these studies is on the translation of the novel, their discussions on the reasonable translation of cultural information, the role of translators, and the external communication of adapted works of *Journey to the West* may offer insights for the present subject.

The existing studies of foreign translations of the *Journey to the West* TV series in Japanese,

Vietnamese, and Burmese, with a focus on their translation and cultural impact in Southeast Asian countries. Zheng specifically analyzed the fidelity of the translation of the notional words in the Vietnamese version of the TV series from two perspectives: meaning and functional fidelity. However, there is currently a lack of research on the English translation of the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West*, which premiered in 2021. Research on this topic can not be found on www.cnki.net.

3 A Study of the English Translation of Proper Nouns in the 1986 TV Series *Journey to the West*

3.1 Research Methods

Based on the above review of the definitions and classifications of proper nouns, it is found that when examining the translation of proper nouns, the authors mainly classify them based on the categories in the definitions, and make cuts or addition to the categories according to the feature and content of certain works studied. For example, *Harry Potter* is a magic-themed novel, so the author added the category of nouns about witchcraft when exploring the translation of proper nouns in this book. Similarly, the *Journey to the West* features numerous characters with ties to Buddhism and Taoism as well as some objects with rich cultural connotation. At the same time, appellations in traditional works such as *A Dream of Red Mansions* and *Journey to the West* can quite reflect the characteristics of Chinese culture, with remarkable translation which shows translators' creativity. Therefore, this essay classifies the proper nouns in its English translation into character names, appellations, event names and item names. The place names in the English translation of the TV series were mostly translated using phonetic transliteration rather than transcreation, so they are not included in the scope of this paper. Among the above four classifications of proper nouns, this essay chooses to analyze examples that are typical cases of the application of transcreation and also well-known by the audience (for instance, the four main characters, Heavenly King Li, the appellations for Sun Wukong, man fruit and At-Will Gold-Banded Staff, etc).

The following table shows similarities and differences between ways for classifying proper nouns of this study and previous studies.

This essay compares the translation of proper nouns in the English version of the 1986 TV series *Journey to the West* with that of the novel's English version. Yu's translation is used for comparison with reference to Li's (2014) findings and analysis of proper nouns in that translation. Yu's version is one of the two most widely circulated and influential English translations of the *Journey to the West*. Compared with another famous translation, the Jenner's version, Yu's version is more accurate in its interpretation of the original text in a way that the target readers can understand. He provides a detailed interpretation of the classical Chinese history, religion, politics, and authorial intentions embedded in the original text, while providing a clear and intuitive interpretation of metaphors with local language peculiarities (e.g. names of people and place).

Table 1. Ways for Classifying Proper Nouns of This Study and Previous Studies

The Current Study	Previous Studies	
character names	character names	character names
appellations	animal names	appellations
event names	institutions names	place names
item names	nouns about witchcraft	scenery names

3.2 Analysis of English Translation of Character Names

This essay will analyze names of main characters and of gods, immortals and demons in this section.

The names of the main characters in this TV series are familiar to the audience, and the translator(s) adopted a concise and easy-to-understand translation of them as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Names of Main Characters

The Original Text	The English Translation
孙悟空	Monkey
猪八戒	Piggy
沙悟净	Sandy
唐僧	Tank Monk, Tripitaka
孙行者	Monkey King
者行孙	Monkey Prince
行者孙	Monkey Sun

In the English translations of the novel *Journey to the West*, the names of the main characters are

typically translated by adding information indicating the identity or status of the characters before and after their names, or by using annotations to mark them. For example, in Yu's translation, “猪八戒” is translated as “Zhu Eight Rules”, “沙悟净” is translated as the surname Sha and the religious name Wujing (Sha means sand, and Wujing means he who awakes to purity”), and “唐僧” is translated as “the Tang Monk”. (Li 2014) This translation technique can be helpful when translating books, as it can aid the reader in understanding the cultural connotations of the main character's name.

The names of the four main characters are translated quite differently in the TV series than they are in the novel, which fully reflects the translator(s)'s subjectivity and creativity. “孙悟空” is directly translated into “monkey”. Although “monkey” may not be an exact translation of Sun Wukong, it is still an appropriate choice because Sun Wukong was given the surname “Sun” by his first master Patriarch Bodhi, due to his resemblance to a monkey (猢狲) and the same pronunciation between “Sun” (猢) and “Sun” (孙). “Piggy” is the translation for “猪八戒”, which is pronounced in a catchy and subdued way. “Sandy” (沙悟净) is a double entendre borrowed from the English personal name “Sandy”. The name has the meaning of “sand”, reflecting Sandy's identity from the River of Sand, and also has the qualities of a person's name, making it a witty and fitting choice. “唐僧” is translated as “Tang Monk” or “Tripitaka” without the definite article “the” used in the novel to conform to spoken usage. The translator(s) considered the fact that the main characters are repeatedly mentioned, and long names would be difficult for voice actors to read naturally. Moreover, the limited size of the screen constrains the length of the subtitle translation, necessitating concision to enable the target audience to comprehend the main content. Following the characteristics and principles of video subtitle translation, the translator(s) aimed to sum up each character's traits succinctly and memorably in one word while preserving the meaning and reflecting their origins. The audience will not have difficulty understanding the meaning of these English names based on the image of the characters and their specific backgrounds.

In the episode “Treasures Recovered in Lotus Cave”(夺宝莲花洞) of *Journey to the West*, Monkey King assumes three distinct identities, “孙行者”, “者行孙”, and “行者孙”, during his battle with the Golden Horn King. These three names are obtained through rearrangement of Chinese characters, which is difficult to achieve in English while maintaining the intended meaning. As a result, the translator(s) created two new names, “Monkey Sun” and “Monkey Prince”, which correspond to “者行孙” and “行者孙”, respectively.

The following is analysis of names of gods, immortals and demons.

Table 3. Names of Gods, Immortals and Demons

The Original Text	The English Translation
托塔天王	Heavenly King Li, God Li
九头虫	Nine-headed Monster
龙子 虫子	dragon sun monster sun
奔波儿灞 灞波儿奔	Benborba Baborben
刁钻古怪 古怪刁钻	Freaky Wile Wily Freak
疾如火 快如风	guards

“托塔天王”, which refers to Li Jing, the god of the Heavenly Court in the *Journey to the West*, is translated as “Heavenly King Li” and “God Li”. In the English translation of the novel, Yu chose to use a transliteration with commentary and translated it as “Devaraja Li, who was the Pagoda Bearer (Li Jing, the god here, is actually the Indian deity Vaisravaja.)”, while Jenner translated it word by word as “The Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King Li Jing”. In the TV series, the translator(s) used “Heavenly King” and “God” as terms to explain the character's divine status, followed by the surname “Li”, which is consistent with the Chinese naming convention and helps clarify the character's identity for the audience.

“九头虫” (Nine-headed Monster) is a demon with nine heads. The word “bug” is an ancient general term for an animal, and “九头虫” here is not a bug or a worm, instead, it is a bird in its original form. The translator(s) did not translate it as bird, but directly uses the word “monster” to point out that it is a demon. This translation is extremely accurate because the demon never takes on a bird shape in the teleplay but always appears as a person.

In another plot related to the Nine-headed Monster, he asks his wife, who is the princess of the Dragon King, to bear him a “龙子” (the heir

to the God Dragon in legends). In response, the princess playfully remarks, "What 'dragon son'? It's probably just a '虫子' (worm)!" In the English version, “龙子” and “虫子” were translated as “dragon son” and “monster son”, respectively. While these translations are literal, they fail to capture the nuance of the original text. “Monster son”, however, creatively and cleverly conveys the double meaning of “虫子” in the text.

Throughout the story, the Monkey engages in multiple battles with demons. While the names of the well-known demons are worth studying for their translations, the names of the minor demons—guards and henchmen—are also fascinating and adorable. Two little demons, in particular, have names that share similar or opposite connotations, or with words and phrases reversed in one name to create the other. For example, the demons of the Dragon Palace are named “奔波儿灞” and “灞波儿奔”, which translate to Catfish Monster and Black Fish Monster, respectively. However, instead of translating their names literally, the translator(s) chose to transliterate them as "Benborba" and "Baborben" to preserve the playful and witty nature of the original names. Similarly, the guards in the cave of the Tawny Lion Spirit, “刁钻古怪” and “古怪刁钻”, are translated as “Freaky Wile” and “Wily Freak”, respectively, with both the form and meaning of the names preserved to show the translator(s)'s creativity and respect for the original work. However, some minor demons have names that are not well translated. For example, the Red Boy has two guards named “疾如火” and “快如风”, which were translated in the TV series simply as “guards”, failing to convey the unique qualities of the two little demons or the originality of their names.

3.3 Analysis of English Translation of Appellations

Table 4. Appellations

The Original Text	The English Translation
猢猻	arrogant monkey
泼猴 猴儿 猴头 猴子	dirty ape
壮士	friend kind 诗人
雷公是我重孙呢	I'm his boss's boss's boss

There are many appellations for Sun Wukong. A

quite typical example is the one associated with “monkey”. In the first episode, Master Puti calls Sun Wukong as 猢猻, complaining about his arrogant and picky attitude when he asks talent instruction. Here “猢猻” is translated as “arrogant monkey”, which not only presents the qualities of Sun Wukong as a monkey, but also reflects his proud and unconventional characteristics. When the money causes havoc in Heaven, some immortals calls him “泼猴”, which is translated as “dirty ape” in the English version. Apes are chimpanzees, gorillas, and other animals in the same family, more wild than monkeys. (Collins) In addition, “ape” is a euphemism for “fool” in Irish slang. Together with the word “dirty”, it thus can express the speaker's contempt and dissatisfaction with Sun Wukong. However, on other occasions, such as when Guanyin Bodhisattva says to Sun Wukong “你这猴儿” and Lingji Bodhisattva “你这猴头”, the translation of “dirty ape” is far from appropriate. Guanyin Bodhisattva is always compassionate and kind, who seems to complain about Wukong sometimes, but is actually correcting and instructing him after assisting him. For example, she says to Sun Wukong when he is swayed about their journey for Buddhist scriptures at first, “猴儿, save your nonsense. Protect tripitaka, and in time, you will be rewarded.”, and gives him three hairs as a blessing, “These three hairs will help you when you are in emergencies.” Here Guanyin Bodhisattva called Sun Wukong “猴儿” with smile. It is inappropriate to translate “猴儿” as “dirty ape” in this case because there is neither abuse nor scorn, but rather exhortation and admonition. In addition, the Tang monk repeatedly says “你这猴子” to express his blame on the Monkey King for killing or being disobedient. This term is also translated as “dirty ape”, which I believe is also a bit inappropriate, for it is clear that the Tang Monk says that with no malicious intent. Thus, “you unruly monkey” might be a better translation.

Additionally, the appellation of “壮士” is also frequently used in the TV series, with different translations depending on the situation. The Tang monk encounters a fierce tiger on his way to the west and is saved and lodged by a hunter. He calls the hunter “壮士” (“friend” in the English version). At Gao Lao Zhuang, Pigsy turns into a human form, beats away the officials

who forcibly takes the civilian girls, and saves the daughter of the Gaos. The girl's father, Old Man Gao, also calls Pigsy “壮士”. Here “壮士” is translated as “kind sir”, expressing the old man's gratitude to Pigsy, as well as the praise and recognition of his good qualities, and setting the stage for the Gaos to select Pigsy as their son-in-law. These two translations, in my opinion, are both creative and fit the story.

Also in this episode, Pigsy bragging about his talents, said that, “雷公是我重孙呢”. Here, the translator(s) did not translate “重孙” into great-grandson, because there is no blood ties between Pigsy and the Thunder God, and it may be difficult for foreign audiences to understand its connotation. Instead, this sentence is translated as “I'm his boss's boss's boss!”, to accurately highlight Pigsy's powerful skill as he is intended to mean in his words, clearing the way for the audience to understand this line.

3.4 Analysis of English Translation of Event Names

Table 5. Event Names

The Original Text	The English Translation
给你来个点筋穴	I'll change your mind
麒麟山獬豸洞	horn dog cave

In the episode “Three Bouts to Requisition the Plantain Fan” (三调芭蕉扇), Monkey King attempts to borrow Princess Iron Fan's fan that can put out fires by physically forcing her to give it up. When kicking and hitting her fails to persuade her, he instead says, “给你来个点筋穴”, which is translated as “I'll change your mind” in English. This translation conveys the intended meaning of the phrase, which refers to Monkey King's hitting and kicking the princess' acupuncture points in her belly until she surrenders due to the pain, leading to her begging for forgiveness and agreeing to lend Monkey King the fan.

Another example of creative translation can be seen in the name of a demon's cave in the series, “麒麟山獬豸洞” (“horn dog cave” in the English version). Qilin and Zhixie are two kinds of mythical creatures from ancient China and do not resemble horn dogs in any way. The reason for this translation choice is explained within the episode itself; Sai TaiSui, Guanyin's ride, escapes from heaven and transforms into a monster on earth, occupying this cave. Its original form is a golden-haired beast, shaped

like a dog with two huge horns. As Sai TaiSui fights Monkey King in this episode, the translator(s) chose to translate the name of the cave according to Sai TaiSui's image as its owner.

3.5 Analysis of English Translation of Item Names

Table 6. Item Names

The Original Text	The English Translation
神铁	shining pillar
人参果	man-fruit
紫金红葫芦	Golden Horn King
白金净玉瓶	Silver Horn King
后天袋子	Future Heaven Bag
药枣茶	poisoned tea

The weapon used by Monkey King, known as the “At-Will Gold-Banded Staff”, was originally made of “神铁”, a magical metal used to control the tides. In the English version of the TV series, this term is translated to “shining pillar”. We can see from the clip that The Dragon King shows weapons to Monkey King, and “神铁” is depicted as a glowing pillar at the bottom of the sea. The Chinese name emphasizes the material and magical properties of the weapon, while the English translation focuses on describing visual appearance of the weapon based on the image shown in the TV series.

The “人参果” is the fruit of the Great Immortal Zhen Yuan's precious immortal tree, but “人参” in this context does not refer to “ginseng”. The fruit is shaped like a baby, having a head, face, and hands that make it appear as a living human figure.

The “紫金红葫芦” and “白金净玉瓶” are treasures of Lord Lao Zi, which the Golden Horn King and the Silver Horn King use to capture Monkey King. These are translated as “gold gourd” and “the white jade vase”. Both translations include some aspects of the original meaning and exclude others, with the former emphasizing the material of the gourd while neglecting its color, and the latter doing the opposite. Proper noun translations in Chinese can convey rich meanings in few words, but the corresponding English translation could be excessively long if translated word for word. Therefore, when translating movies and TV series, the translators need to be selective with the details they include to make the translation concise without compromising the reader's

understanding.

The “Human Seed Bag”, also known as “后天袋子”, is a powerful treasure of Maitreya Buddha. The translator(s) rendered it as “Future Heaven Bag”, which is too literal and fails to convey the connotation of the name of the treasure, thereby confusing the audience. “后天” here means “nurture” instead of “future”. The concept of “nature” and “nurture” derives from Zhou Yi, wherein “nature” refers to something that is naturally present, while “nurture” refers to something artificially created (Deng 1989). Maitreya’s “后天袋子” is a bag that absorbs life entities he created when researching the beginnings of life. Therefore, it can be translated as “nurture bag” or “human seed bag created by Maitreya Buddha”.

In the episode entitled “Trapped in Gossamer Cave”(误入盘丝洞), the spider spirit’s brother, the centipede spirit, poisons the red date tea he has prepared for the Tang monk and his disciples to kill them. The Tang monk and Pigsy are then poisoned into a coma. On the way to saving his master, Monkey receives guidance from the Bodhisattva, who calls the centipede spirit’s tea “药枣茶” (“poisoned tea” in the English version). The principal feature of this tea, its poisonous nature, is captured in this translation, while other features such as “药” and “枣” take a secondary role. “Poisoned tea” enables the story to flow smoothly.

4. Findings and Discussions

This paper explores the translation of proper nouns in the TV series from the perspective of transcreation, comparing them with the English version of the novel. The following findings have been derived: Firstly, possible reasons for transcreation include the word limit for subtitles in films and television, the “untranslatability” of certain cultural concepts, and the need to match images in the video.

Secondly, three main methods for transcreation include integration, rearrangement or selection, using another word to describe the same thing, and bold transliteration. Three main methods for transcreation have been identified in this paper:

1) Integration, rearrangement, or selection of the complex meaning contained in the original Chinese name. For example, “沙僧” (Sandy) is an example of message integration, while “紫金红葫芦” (the Gold Gourd), “人参果” (Man

Fruit), and “药枣茶” (Poisoned Tea) are examples of message rearrangement or selection.

2) The use of another word to describe the same thing. This involves selecting words that are not directly associated with the original text, but can better express its meaning based on the contextual information of the words or the images presented in the video. Examples include “重孙” (Boss’s Boss’s Boss), “麒麟山獬豸洞” (Horn Gog Cave), and “孙行者, 者行孙, 行者孙” (Monkey Prince, Monkey Sun, Monkey Prince).

3) Bold transliteration. This involves transcribing the original Chinese name phonetically, using English or other languages to create new words that sound similar to the original Chinese names. Examples include “奔波儿灞 and 灞波儿奔” (Benborba and Baborben) and “刁钻古怪 and 古怪刁钻” (Freaky Wile and Wily Freak).

Thirdly, some imperfect translations exist due to inadequate understanding of cultural information and failure to translate within the context. Two issues with the existing translation of proper nouns have been identified in this paper:

1) Inadequate understanding of the cultural information contained in certain proper nouns. For example, “后天袋子” was inaccurately translated due to a lack of understanding of its cultural meaning.

2) Failure to translate within context. The same words in different situations may express different meanings in the original Chinese TV series, but the translator(s) failed to accurately convey the nuances in the context, resulting in inconsistencies between the translation and the original text in terms of factors like emotions. For example, the translation of “猴子” in different people’s lines.

Based on the above findings, the current study proposes practical suggestions for improving the English translation of proper names in traditional film and television works, thus enhancing the promotion of traditional Chinese culture.

1) Proper names such as people’s names, events, and objects in traditional Chinese movies and TV dramas carry cultural implications. Therefore, it is important for translators to have a comprehensive understanding of the cultural background before beginning the translation process.

2) The translator needs to consider the target audience's cultural background and understanding of certain concepts. For ideas that may be difficult to comprehend due to cultural differences, the translator can creatively express the same message in different words without losing its cultural significance.

3) Due to the limitation of word count in subtitles, translators must convey the connotation of the original work using concise language, and in some cases, transcreation techniques may be necessary.

4) Contextual translation is important to ensure accuracy and coherence in translating proper names.

5. Conclusion

The 1986 TV series *Journey to the West* is a classical work of traditional Chinese culture. Its rich religious and cultural connotations, distinctive characters, and localized language features has brought infinite entertainment to the audience, while posing a great challenge to translator(s).

This study adopts a transcreation perspective and examines the English translation of proper nouns in the 1986 *Journey to the West* TV series. It analyzes the effectiveness and limitations of transcreation in translating proper nouns, focusing on names of characters and things, and exploring the translator(s)'s motivations and the expressive effects of transcreation. Using transcreation, the translator(s) conveyed the original text's connotation while considering the target audience's understanding, resulting in succinct and lively language that promotes interest and spreads traditional Chinese culture.

This study acknowledges previous research while presenting its own perspective. It identifies shortcomings in existing translations and offers recommendations for improvement. The essay compares the English translations of proper nouns in the TV series and the original novel, examining differences and proposing effective techniques for translating proper nouns in traditional films and TV series. These techniques include studying the cultural connotations of proper nouns, ensuring easy comprehension for the target audience, condensing translations to meet subtitle word

limits, and achieving transcreation within the context.

References

- [1] Gao, W., Wu, X.N. and Zhang, S., Translation of the cultural content of *Journey to the West*. *Journal of Panzhihua University* 2009 (02), 79-81.
- [2] Hu, W.J., Translation of the cultural content of *Journey to the West*. *Journal of Panzhihua University* 2009 (02), 79-81.
- [3] Lei, M., A study of the Chinese translation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* from the perspective of functional equivalence. *Journal of Kaifeng Culture and Art Vocational College* 2021 (05), 67-68.
- [4] Shu, Q.Q., The principle of English translation. *Journal of Chengdu University (Social Science Edition)* 2006 (03), 106-109.
- [5] Tan, A.Q., On the translation of the two English translations of a *Dream of Red Mansions*. *Journal of Yuzhou University (Social Science Edition)* 2002 (06), 68-70.
- [6] Wang, C.Y. and Lu, R., Creative translation under the background of economic globalization. *Chinese Translation* 2015 (02), 72-76.
- [7] Wang D. (2022). Negotiating translation and transcreation of children's literature: from Alice to the Moomins (New frontiers in translation studies). *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies*, 9(1), pp. 112-116.
- [8] Wang, Y., On the cultural preservation and transformation in the game translation. *Overseas English* 2015 (15), 143-144.
- [9] Xu, Y.H, A Sociolinguistic View of Anim. *Chinese Semiotic Studies*(2013)
- [10] Zhang, G.L. and Fan, W.Q., Defamiliarization of China's diplomatic discourse since the 18th CPC National Congress. *Shanghai Translation* 2022 (06), 44-49.
- [11] Zhang, Z.Z., Creative translation in the Translation of Chinese poetry and English. *Translation and Communication* 2021 (02), 3-20.
- [12] Zhao, S.S., *English-Chinese Encyclopedia special name dictionary*. Beijing: The Commercial Press (2008)