

## **Preliminary Study on Chinese Translation of English Songs' Titles**

**Wang Jing**

Ph.D. in Philosophy in English Language

Lyceum of the Philippines University

Huai'an International Exchanges Center, Huai'an, Jiangsu, China

(Email Add: 中国江苏省淮安市清江浦区西大街电厂小区一区 104 栋 102 室,

王晶, 13852370349)

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ejells.2013/vol11n43347>

Published June 17, 2023

---

**Citation:** Jing W. (2023) Preliminary Study on Chinese Translation of English Songs 'Titles, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol. 11, No.4, pp.33-47,

---

**ABSTRACT:** *With the rapid development of economic cooperation and cultural exchanges among countries and regions, especially the proposal of "a human community with a shared future", the world has become one family. The English songs, an integral part of foreign culture, has been introduced into the Chinese market and can boost communication and exchanges. But over a long time, researchers in the translation field have ignored the Chinese translation of English songs' titles, which not only hinders further understanding of foreign culture but also blocks the cross-cultural exchanges. Therefore, it is of great urgency to conduct some research in this field. In actual cross-cultural communication, it is very easy to find failures in exchanges caused by misunderstandings due to differences in language and culture. As a result, culture is a crucial element in Chinese translation of English songs' titles. This paper is written under the guidance of Eugene. A.Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory (FET), aiming to analyze some basic techniques in translating English songs' titles. According to Nida, both meaning and form should be taken into consideration in translation. This paper uses examples and comparisons to analyze and study the Chinese translation of the English songs' titles so as to help people better understand, accept and transmit foreign culture. Based on the connotation of functional equivalence theory, the application of this theory in title translation is concretely analyzed, and the relevant main principles are also summarized. With this theory, the quality of translation in the songs' titles will be, hopefully, effectively enhanced. Some translation methods like literal translation, free translation, transliteration, domesticating translation and expanding translation are also included.*

**KEY WORDS:** English songs' titles, Chinese translation, functional equivalence theory

---

## INTRODUCTION

With the surging communication among countries all over the world, abundant foreign cultures, including English songs, have been introduced into China. Song is an effective way to express emotions with voice, as well as a concentrated reflection of different countries or nations. As a shining pearl and an integral element of a culture, song serves as a platform to deliver the message and enhance communication. At the same time, as a form of art, people can enjoy the aesthetic beauty in songs. Though exchanges have been arguably increased, it is a pity that the Chinese translation of English songs have long been overlooked, not to mention the translation of songs' titles. The backward development in this field, to some extent, blocks people from further understanding the foreign culture and exchanges among countries.

Little study has been conducted and little attention has been paid in the Chinese translation of English songs' titles at home and abroad. *The Exploration and Practice in Song Translation* written by Xue Fan, the famous musician and translator in China, is the first book to introduce songs' translation in a systematical and theoretical way. After this, a few domestic scholars began to focus on this research. In Miao Ning's *On Translation methods of English Songs' Titles*, she put forward a few techniques in translating English songs' titles, which attached much importance to compiling translation and expanding translation. In *Aesthetic Thinking of Translation of English Songs' Names*, she also pointed out that translation from an aesthetic perspective is an activity of enjoying beauty. In *On Translation of English Songs' Names*, Ding Rongrong suggested that sufficient attention should be paid to the use of Chinese Four-character idioms.

This paper mainly focuses on exploring the principles and specific methods in translating English songs' titles under the guidance of Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory. Based on the current situation of the Chinese translation of English songs' titles, it is worthwhile and meaningful to do some relevant study in this field. This paper also pays due attention to the domesticating translation, which suggests more importance should be attached to Chinese four-character structures and classical allusions.

### Functions

English songs' titles are generally used to fulfill certain functions and therefore while translating English songs' titles, translators have to be aware of the functions of the songs' titles and regard them as guidelines in translation practice as a good translation can often achieve one of the following functions.

### **Informative function**

As a kind of art, song can also reflect the real life by creating some lively images, and from these artistic images, a panoramic view of the world will be unfolded in front of people. The informative function just means that song can offer the audiences some information through the description of songwriter, maybe an unforgettable experience of himself, maybe a scene he once saw, or maybe just a historical story. While, English songs' titles are the brands and advertisements of the songs as they highlight the main content or point that singers intended to express as well as cover the feelings which songwriters meant to deliver. Therefore, the title of a song, to some extent, is the essence and a mirror of the whole song. So translators have to deliver as much content as possible so as to make the target listeners well-informed. Furthermore, it is of much importance to clarify the themes of songs so that audience can get the correct information from the songs' titles. For instance, "*Love story*" by Taylor Swift and "Just the way you are" by Bruno Mars both provide us with sufficient information of the song, so we can just translate "*Love story*" into 《爱情故事》 and "*Just the way you are*" into 《你就是你》.

### **Educational function**

Music can educate and influence people. After listening to a beautiful song, people could be enlightened and inspired. In China, as early as the spring and autumn period over 2000 years ago, the great philosopher and renowned educator Confucius called for that music should be an integral part of the education of "six arts", which also includes archery, mathematics, ritual, chariot-riding and calligraphy. A famous Chinese scholar, Cai Yuanpei, also the first minister of Education in China, thought highly of music education and he holds that adding the spirit of friendship and cooperation into school education is the purpose of music education. The song titled "*We are the world*" by Michael Jackson has its unique reason of being popular, not only for its melody, but for the message the song delivers, especially in today's world where some power countries still advocate for decoupling. The song "*someone like you*" by Adele Adkins, a very outstanding American singer, conveys the idea that a bad relationship is not the end of the world and we have to be strong and meet difficulties head-on. Eventually, we will find someone. This song gives people hope, especially for those in dark and twisted relationships. Every time, I see the title "*someone like you*", I feel empowered and educated and get strength and inspiration.

### **Aesthetic function**

Songs are a special form of art and songs' titles, as the essence and a mirror of songs, are full of aesthetic beauty. The English songs' titles are beautiful in rhyme and styles. They not only deliver the meaning of the song, but also transmit the spirit and beauty, arouse strong resonance among people. The classic songs' titles like "*My Heart Will Go on*" and "*Right*

*Here Waiting*”are still lingering on many people’s mind. Those songs with beautiful songs’ titles often attract listeners’ attention first and one sight of them will give people endless indulgence of beauty. In addition, these songs’ titles always bring a sense of romance while expressing the strong determination and persistence. In English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles, for the realization of the aesthetic function, translators should pay more attention to the translation of rhyme and rhythm, and great efforts also should be made to create a translation that songs’ titles can well match music, so that the song can truly become a perfect unification of titles and music.

### **Commercial function**

On one hand, songs are a spiritual product, which makes them full of artistic beauty to attract potential listeners. On the other hand, they are material products as they are meant to become best sellers in order to create profits. The commercial function and value, therefore, become necessary and important. Songs’ producers are trying their utmost best to attract listeners’ attention by advocating the songs’ titles and make them commonly understood and accepted.

### **DIFFICULTIES**

#### **Features of English songs’ titles**

First, English songs’ titles are mostly composed of several words or phrases which are supposed to be brief, memorable, and most importantly, eye-catching and ear-pleasant. Second, the songs’ titles contain the interpretation of beautiful tune, which means that the translated version must be full of artistic beauty as well. Third, English songs’ titles can fulfill certain functions that have been mentioned before. The translated version, therefore, are supposed to achieve the similar functions. Fourth, songs have been divided into different genres and each genre has its own characteristics. For instance, the tunes of country music are generally very smooth, beautiful, and the structure of the form is relatively simple. The content is usually about longing for a warm and peaceful home, singing sweet love and the pain of lovelorn and so on. While rock music is simple, powerful, straightforward, especially its strong rhythm. It conforms to teenagers energetic, active characteristics; Rock 'n' roll's freewheeling performance situation suits their rebellious psychology and it sings about subjects that are closely related to their concerns. All these factors give headache to translators and make the translation of English songs’ titles a tough job.

#### **Difference in cultural connotation**

Translation and culture are two interdependent elements. Culture is an integral element in translating English songs’ titles. The ways of thinking, beliefs and values of different

nations often give rise to misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. In translation practices, many translation problems and errors are derived from cultural differences. Just as the famous Chinese translator Mr. Wang Zuoliang puts it, in translating, “*What’s self-evident in one culture has to be painstakingly explained in another culture.* For instance, translators may translate the song “*Silent Night*” into a night with silence, while it is actually a Christmas song and this “silent night” is a “holy night”. To westerners, they know the song is about Christmas due to their cultural background, but as for Chinese listeners, it is hard to understand that.

### **Eugene A. Nida’s Functional Equivalence Theory (FET)**

Eugene A. Nida is a distinguished American contemporary linguist, translation theorist and translator who has made great contributions to Bible translation. He has been acclaimed as “the father of modern translation theory”. Nida has put forth many theories of translation, including language universality, message of translation, theory of readers' response, functional equivalence theory, and etc. Among them, functional equivalence theory is the most powerful translation theory with great influences in the academic circles of translation.

Since the early 1960s, Nida, together with his famous FET, has exerted tremendous influence in the western world. As one of the most classical theories of translation around the world, Nida’s functional equivalence theory is a useful tool for dealing with songs’ titles’ translation. FET pays more attention to the target language text and its readers who have often been ignored in earlier translation theories. Since early 1980s, Nida’s FET has been constantly introduced into China.

Functional equivalence theory is a theory that centers on the target text and the TT readers, mainly containing three elements, namely, meaning, style and readers' response. In *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Nida makes a clear definition of translation, which can be also regarded as an important explanation to this theory: “Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source- language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.” (Nida & Taber, 2004: 12) It is a dynamic equivalence which stands for reproducing “the closest natural equivalent” to the source language message in the receptor language. The “dynamic equivalence” means that receptors in the target language shall respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language. The “closest” means that due to linguistic and cultural differences between two languages, absolute equivalence between the source language text (SLT) and target language text (TLT) is impossible, but only the greatest correspondence can be achieved.

The “natural” means that the TLT should be accepted by its readers not only on the level of language but also of culture and mentality. In short, “natural” refers to the smoothness and readability of the TLT. That is to say, this equivalence has to be natural without any “Translationese”, just as Tan Zaixi said, “*The best translation does not sound like a translation*”.

Nida holds that translation is essentially an action of cultural communication between two cultures, and the most serious mistake in translating are usually made not because of verbal inadequacy, but of wrong cultural assumptions (Nida, 1993).

From the above analysis, three norms are concluded to judge whether one successfully and skillfully adopts FET:

- 1 to deliver the message and spirit of the original text
- 2 to use the fluent language and conform to the principles and practices of the translated text.
- 3 to achieve the similar response from readers at home and abroad.

Based on FET, the translated text has to achieve similar readers’ response. Therefore, in translating English songs’ titles, translators have to focus their attention on the target language text. And the ideal state of translating English songs’ names into Chinese is to make Chinese listeners feel essentially the same as English listeners do. What’s more, functional equivalence is the closest natural equivalence, which asks for greatest correspondence and fluent language without translationese. Therefore, in translating English songs’ titles, the translated text has to achieve the same functions of songs’ titles and clarify the same themes of the songs.

## **Methods Adopted in Translating**

### **Literal translation**

Literal translation is “a translation strategy where the translator produces a target text while remaining the formal features of the source text and conforming generally to the grammar of the target language.” (Sun Yifeng 2016:211). That is to say, literal translation is form-based translation. In Nida’s *Language, Culture and Translation* (1993:125), he holds the ideas that: “If more or less literal correspondence is functionally equivalent in meaning, then obviously no adjustments in form are necessary.” For example, in translating country songs’ titles, literal translation is highly recommended as it can easily deliver the original meaning and country flavor to the target language listeners. Mariah Carey’s “*Hero*” is translated into 《英雄》. Literal translation is based on word-meaning. The song “*Hero*” is mainly about a hero who helps people cast fears aside and become strong. Obviously, the

translated version 《英雄》 in Chinese reflects the theme of the song and achieve the informative function as well. Nida also advocates that when literal translation can deliver the message to the target language audience, then no other adjustments are necessary. The song, “*I Will Always Love You*”, by Whitney Houston, an American singer, is translated literally into 《我将永远爱你》 as well. It is with deep and consistent affection and well illustrates the main theme of the song and achieve informative function. People can understand, feel this love and get the message the singer meant to deliver. Some other examples adopted literal translation are listed in the following: “*One Sweet Day*”, “*Girl in the Mirror*”, “*I Need to Wake up*”, “*You Light up My Life*”, “*Color of the Wind*”, etc.

### **Free translation**

In the process of translating the foreign songs’ titles, sometimes word-for-word translation or mechanically correspondence cannot deliver the message or promote the understanding. For instance, when translating rock and roll songs, in order to make listeners want to dance and feel high-spirited, translators have to use brief and concise words. In this condition, pursuit for literal translation obviously cannot achieve that function. Under this circumstance, translators have to reorganize the word order and sentence structure of the original text by using brief and concise words.

As Nida’s theories of translation are mainly stated in terms of how to produce an acceptable translation as well as enable translators to capture the meaning and spirit of the original language text without being rigidly bound to its linguistic structure, free translation is highly advocated.

Free translation is a translation method that produces the general meaning of the original text without rigid adhering to the literal meaning and the structure of the original (Wang Zuoliang, 1989:59). That is to say, free translation does not pay too much attention to the source text including sentence structures, choices of words and figures of speech but pursues the main content of as well as the fluent and natural translation of the original text.

#### **1 “*I Don’t Like to Sleep Alone*” 《孤枕难眠》**

Paula Anka’s “*I don’t like to sleep alone*” is translated into 《孤枕难眠》 rather than 《我不愿独自入眠》. In Chinese, “Gu, 孤” means alone and compared with “独自”, it is more brief and can easily arouse the sympathy from listeners. Literally, there is no “难”, which means “hard” in English but it shows stronger feelings compared with “don’t like to”(不想, 不愿). This free translation version is not bound to the original structure but delivers the similar meaning of the original text. Therefore, it will achieve active response from Chinese listeners due to the aesthetic beauty of the song’s title.

## 2 “*Nothing’s Gonna Change My Love for You*” 《此情永不渝》

Just like the news’ titles, the song’ titles are also meant to catch the audience’s attention at first sight, which asks for briefness of the songs’ titles. Compared with 《没有什么能够改变我对你的爱》, 《此情永不渝》 is more concise. It has been mentioned before that the songs’ titles are the essence and mirror of the whole songs, therefore, the words we use in translating must be brief and concise as well. That is to say, when we can use five words to deliver the message effectively, then it is unnecessary and unwise to use thirteen words.

### **Transliteration**

Transliteration means translating the original language according to its pronunciation without considering the source language’s meaning. (唐昀, 2009: 70). The names of people or places familiar to Chinese people are occasionally employed as the names of songs.

#### 1 “*Diana*” 《戴安娜》

First of all, we know the song is about a girl named 《戴安娜》, and second, more cultural exchanges with western world make us easily accept the foreign elements, including their exotic names of people and places.

#### 2 “*New York*” 《纽约城》

New York is a melting pot and the transliteration version has been widely accepted among people. The lyrics like “Irish, Italian, Jews and Hispanics, religious nuts, political fanatics in the stew” just reflect this characteristic.

Just as we translate the countries’ names, transliteration is an important and commonly-used method when there is no other way that can be easier, more convenient and at the same time be accepted plainly and directly by Chinese people.

### **Domesticating translation**

The Domesticating Translation approach was introduced by the German philosopher and translator Friedrich Schleiermacher. According to this approach, the translator should prioritize the target audience's needs and culture over the source text's originality or style. Therefore, the translator should adapt the source text to fit into the target language, culture, and audience, to ensure that the translation appears natural and understandable to the target audience. Nida’s FET focuses on readers’ response, and stresses naturalness of a rendering, which reflects the purposes of the domesticating translation. Domestication is “a translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers” (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 2004:43). Bao Huinan (包惠南, 2001:297) also defines it as “using the characters which are close to the original words in expressing function but with remarkable Chinese cultural characteristics to translate the



source text”.

The aim for both domesticating translation and Nida's FET is for translators to achieve effective communication and understanding directly in different cultures (姚丽文, 2003). When translating English's songs' titles, domesticating Translation plays its due part because it can help target language readers better understand and appreciate songs.

- "*Hallelujah*" can be translated as 《哈利路亚》;
- "*Yesterday*" can be translated as 《昨日》;
- "*All You Need Is Love*" can be translated as 《爱就是一切》;
- "*Shape of You*" can be translated as 《你的身形》;
- "*I Will Always Love You*" can be translated as 《我会永远爱你》(方远,1994).

These domesticating translations are based on the target language readers' understanding of the songs' title and consideration of the cultural background, so that the songs are more in line with the taste of the target language readers.

### **Chinese four-character structures**

In Chinese, the number “Four” is a very good, lucky and blessed number. There are four major directions of east, west, south and north. Four treasures of Chinese study of writing brush, ink stick, ink slab and paper. Four gentlemen in flowers of plum blossoms, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum. The language of Chinese is broad and profound, and the concise and comprehensive four-character words have always been regarded as the essence of Chinese and Chinese people like to use four-character structures even in the translation of English songs' titles.

Chinese four-character structure includes four-character idioms as well as any combination of four-word groups. The advantages of four-character structure are obvious. It is concise in terms of the content. It is pleasing to the ear in terms of voice and it is vivid in terms of the expression effect. In the songs' titles' translation, if used properly, Chinese four-character structure can make the translation magic and vivid. For example, "*We Are the World*" 《天下一家》, which won the 1986 Grammy Award for "Song of the Year"; "*Nice Work if You Can Get It*" was translated 《天赐良缘》. "*Hotel California*" was translated 《加州旅馆》. Carpenter's "*Yesterday Once More*" was translated 《昨日重现》 and another song of the band "*Top of the World*" was translated 《世界之巅》. Other examples are: "*Tears in Heaven*" 《泪洒天堂》 and "*Fallen Flowers*" 《落花辞枝》(邓印易,2001). In the above examples, the four-character structures not only accurately reflect the connotation of the original songs' titles, but also make the translated titles concise, neat, rhythmic and catchy.

In China, there are a lot of structures composed of four characters which are frequently used in both written and oral languages as they are concise, brief, memorable and informative. Chinese people are fond of four-character structures, which are labeled with distinguished Chinese elements.

### **Classical allusions**

“Allusion is a brief reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place or event, or to another literary work or passage” (Abrams, 2014). In literature, allusions are used to link concepts that the reader already has knowledge of, with concepts discussed in the story. Allusion, as a form of a culture, therefore, draws on our collective knowledge on literature and mythology, making the understanding and use of allusions more difficult and tougher than common language. However, the successful adoption of allusions often reinforces cultural bond.

#### **“*Right Here Waiting*” 《此情可待》**

It was often interpreted into 《此情可待》, which was from a well-known line in the poem Jin Se (锦瑟) by a famous poet from Tang dynasty, Li Shangyin (李商隐)-- “此情可待成追忆, 只是当时已惘然”. When learning to feel what the poet felt, you probably hold that 《此情可待》 is so excellent. First of all, it connects a foreign song with Chinese literature which is full of aesthetic beauty and often admired by most people. Another reason is using “情” in the song’s title which tends to illustrate the theme of the song as well as arouse more feelings from readers. Because many people need that kind of feelings to fulfill their body and soul, therefore, it is easy to catch their eyes and make the song popular.

#### **2 “*A Place Nearby*” 《天堂若比邻》**

It is sung by Lene Martin from Norway and translated into 《天堂若比邻》. The choice of words “若比邻” was originated from the famous line “海内存知己, 天涯若比邻” by Wang Bo (王勃) from Tang Dynasty. It says that even if the soul mate-kind friends are thousands far away, they are also like neighbors who are close. Therefore, with this kind of meaning, it perfectly suits the song. As the line goes “Heaven is a place nearby, so there’s no need to say goodbye...heaven is a place nearby, so I won’t be so far away...” Even if they are torn apart by destiny, they still stand by and look for each other. What’s more, adding “Heaven, 天堂” into the song title achieves the informative function of the songs’ titles. Besides, “天堂若比邻” is full of aesthetic beauty; at the same time it makes a connection with “天涯”, which is similar to Wang Bo’s (王勃) famous line.

#### **3 “*Tea for Two*” 《鸳鸯茶》.**

“Yuan Yang” or “鸳鸯”, known as mandarin ducks, are love birds. “Yuan”(鸳) is a

male bird and “Yang”(鸯) is a female bird. They were first compared to “brothers”, which appeared in *Literary Selections* 《文选》, “昔为鸳和鸯, 今为参与商”, “骨肉缘枝叶”. It was not until Lu Zhaolin (卢照邻), a poet in Tang dynasty, that referred them as an affectionate couple and a famous line was “愿作鸳鸯不羡仙”. After that, many scholars use mandarin ducks or Yuan Yang (鸳鸯) as a metaphor for loving couples.

“*Tea for two*” tells that the man is eager to build a family with this woman, just as the lyrics go, “Picture you upon my knee, just tea for two and two for tea...Just me for you and you for me, alone...We will raise a family, a boy for you, a girl for me...Oh, can't you see how happy life would be?”...Apparently, this tea is exclusively prepared for lovers or couples. Therefore, “鸳鸯”, as mentioned before, is deeply labeled with Chinese elements and “鸳鸯茶” is distinguished with romance and aesthetic beauty.

### Expanding translation

Expanding translation refers to expanding and explaining the original text in more detail and more accurately when translating, showing the hidden information and emotions in the original text through the translation, making the translation closer to the original text and conveying the same or similar meaning and emotions in the target language. (许渊冲, 2006 ). This translation technique is usually used in the translation of poetry, literature, music and other artistic fields, because the works in these fields often contain more metaphors, symbols and emotional connotations, if only according to the literal meaning of the translation, it may lose the artistic value and beauty of the original works. Expanding translation can help readers better understand and appreciate the artistic charm of the original works and deepen their knowledge and perception of the original works.

In some cases, based on the whole content or the theme of the songs, translators have to add new elements into the songs' titles to help listeners grasp the main content of songs so that they can be understandable and memorable by the songs' lovers. In this way, the naturalness and smoothness can also be achieved. Expanding translation can play an important role in translating English songs' titles because it can help translators more accurately express the meaning and emotions of the original songs' titles. Here are some examples of expanding translation of English songs' titles. “*Let It Be*” can be translated as 《让它自然发生》 because the song expresses the connotation of letting go of past emotions and looking forward to the future. “*Bohemian Rhapsody*” can be translated as 《波西米亚狂想曲》, as this is the theme and sentiment of the song, which expresses the spirit of freedom, creativity and individuality. “*Hello*” can be translated as 《你好吗? 》. This is the theme and emotion of the song, expressing the mood of missing, remembering and starting anew. “*Yesterday*” can be translated as 《昨日的回忆》, because this is the theme and emotion of the song,

which expresses the memory and sadness of the past. “*Just Like A Pill*” is translated into 《爱情特效药》. Literally speaking, “just like” means “Xiang (像)” in Chinese, while “a pill” means “yao pian (药片)”. If we put it together, we can get that—《像药片一样》 which is not favored by Chinese people. If we take the whole content of the song into consideration, we will grasp the general meaning of the song that is all about love—love makes one better and ill etc. As a result, adding “love”(爱情) into the song’s title not only makes people know the general meaning of the song but also makes the song appealing to the listeners. Another point is that changing “药片” into “特效药” also achieves the same effect as the power of love is stated. “*Yellow River*” can be translated into 《黄河镇》. Yellow river is the second longest river in China and honored as cradle of Chinese culture. Therefore, literal translation will lead the listeners to think that the song is about the famous Chinese river, nevertheless, the song tells about a soldier coming back to his hometown after winning the war. Just as its lyrics go, “I’m going back to the place that I love—Yellow River—Yellow River is in my blood; it’s the place I love; tomorrow night you’ll find me sleeping underneath the moon at Yellow River...” Obviously, yellow river here is a town rather than a Chinese river. The song expresses the singer’s homesick feelings by using affectionate and moving words. Adding “镇” can clarify misunderstandings and correctly deliver the message.

These Expanding translations are based on the meaning, emotion and cultural background of the original song titles, making the translations closer to the meaning and emotion of the original songs and making the target language readers more able to understand and appreciate these English songs.

## CONCLUSION

As advanced forms of literature, songs are much more difficult to translate, not to mention the songs’ titles, for according to the definition, they are crystallization of language and music, which needs both good command of language proficiency and high proficiency in musical knowledge. There are a large number of factors that can influence translation, causing numerous challenges to the translators. Indeed, translators can barely make a perfect translation with the transmission of all the information involved. That is because different understandings of the source text and different translation methods employed in the target text will lead to completely different translated versions. Undoubtedly, something will lose in the process of translation, and how to minimize the losses in English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles is the main problem to be solved in this thesis. Through comprehensive studies and analyses, the author finds that Nida's functional equivalence theory plays a leading role in English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles. Functional

equivalence theory is a practical theory centering on the target text and the TT readers. In the theory, Nida points out that what do translators really seek for is “the closest natural equivalent” (Nida & Taber, 2004: 12), and in the process of translation, both form and meaning should be carefully considered. However, if form will prevent the TT readers from fully understanding and appreciating the text as the original readers, it is necessary to make some proper adjustments to form for ensuring the transmission of meaning. In fact, this is just the real connotation of this theory. In short, translators should firstly seek for a faithful translation to both the original form and meaning, but if there are difficulties to achieve it, the translation that is only equivalent to the meaning of the source text can be also accepted by the TT audiences. Therefore, in this thesis, English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles is combined with the connotation of functional equivalence theory to analyze the application of this theory in title translation. That is to say, the translation of English songs’ titles is an important area of study that has been relatively neglected in the field of translation studies and there is no single “right” way to translate a songs’ title. Rather, different strategies may be used depending on various factors such as cultural differences, linguistic considerations, and marketing needs. In this part, how to achieve the equivalence in meaning from language, culture, and the background of songwriting is been mainly discussed. Furthermore, according to the features of songs’ title, several principles of title translation are also summarized:

- 1) For title translation, correctness comes first, any mistakes should not be made to mislead the TT audiences.
- 2) As the eyes of song, titles should be concisely translated to make them easy to be remembered for people, so that the relevant songs can be widely spread.
- 3) Song is an art for everyone, so it is necessary to make the translated titles acceptable by people of different social classes, and the feature of popularity should be considered.
- 4) To achieve the aesthetic effects, the principle of novelty should be followed in English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles.

In general, all the four principles should be obeyed in title translation. However, they should be followed in this order while these principles conflict. That is to say, a good translated title should first be correct, then be concise with popularity, and finally be full of novelty. As stated before, songs titles has four important functions, they are the informative function, the educational function, the aesthetic function and the commercial function, and each of them has its unique effects. As the soul of song, titles can reflect the essence of the whole song. Usually, only with a full understanding of the songs’ titles can people catch the deep feelings of a song. In this thesis, how the Chinese translated titles respectively achieve the equivalence in the four functions are analyzed in detail. To be more specific, in order to

minimize the losses in English-Chinese translation of titles, songs should be translated according to different functions:

- 1) If a song is translated for those people who only have a desire to know its literal meaning, then it can be literally translated without any considerations of other factors. To put it simply, a faithful translation to the original song is needed.
- 2) If a song has a special purpose, such as educational purpose, then some appropriate adjustments should be made to achieve this purpose, even the translation technique of “re-creation” can be employed. And this is especially embodied in children’s songs.
- 3) If the translation aims to make a song singable and be full of beauty, then the translation of rhyme and rhythm must be taken into considerations, being the most difficult task for all the translators.

At last, to help people create a better translation of titles, a few translation methods of translation are also provided, namely, transliteration, domesticating translation, Chinese four-character structures, allusions and expanding translation. However, several limitations do exist in this thesis. First of all, it only focuses on English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles, but pays no attention to Chinese-English translation of songs’ titles; secondly, the examples cited in the thesis are limited and few and might not be objective; lastly, the analysis of titles translation is made on the basis of the author’s own understanding and is incomplete. The researches of songs’ titles translation in China have been paid little attention to in the academic field and there is still much that remains to be explored. For instance, future research could focus on the translation of song lyrics or the marketing aspects of songs’ titles translation. Additionally, more empirical studies could be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of different translation strategies in different contexts. This thesis hopes to arouse more concerns on English-Chinese translation of songs’ titles in theoretical area, and promote the healthy development of songs’ titles translation in China, as well as the artistic exchange between Chinese and western music.

In conclusion, the translation of English songs’ titles is a rich and multifaceted area of study that deserves further attention. By gaining a better understanding of the translation strategies used in this field, we can not only improve our understanding of cross-cultural communication, but also contribute to the development of translation theory and practice.

## REFERENCES

- 薛范.《歌曲翻译探索与实践》【M】. 武汉: 湖北教育出版社, 2002.
- 苗宁.论英文歌曲名称的翻译原则, 南阳师范学院院报, 2008, 8: 80-81.
- 苗宁.英文歌曲名称翻译的美学思考, 作家, 2008年12期.

- 丁容容.英语歌名的翻译技巧【J】.黎明职业大学学报, 2000, (40).
- Nida. Eugene.A. *Language, Culture And Translation*. 上海:上海外语教育出版社, 1989.
- Eugene A. Nida, Charles R. Taber. *The Theory and Practice of Translation* 【M】. Brill Academic Pub, 1982.
- 谭载喜.《新编奈达论翻译》【M】. 北京: 中国对外翻译出版公司. 1999.
- 孙艺凤.《文化翻译》【M】. 北京 : 北京大学出版社. 2016.
- 王佐良.《翻译:思考与试笔》【M】. 外语教学与研究出版社, 1989.
- 唐昀, 试论英文歌名的翻译方法, 山西广播电视大学学报, 2009, 70 (3) : 74-75.
- Mark Shuttleworth & Moira Cowie. 【M】. *Dictionary of Translation Studies*.2004
- 包惠南.《文化语境与语言翻译》【M】. 北京: 中国标准出版社.2001.
- Meyer Howard Abrams. *A Dictionary of literary Terms*. Beijing:Peking University Press. 2014.
- 许渊冲. 翻译的艺术【M】. 北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2006.
- Ma Hujuan. *A Study on Nida's Translation Theory*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2003.
- Newmark Peter. *Approaches to Translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Education Press, 2001.
- 邓印易, 英文经典歌曲 101 首, 北京: 人民音乐出版社, 2001, 25-49.
- 方远, 英语歌曲全集, 北京: 华夏出版社, 1994, 42-59.
- 姚丽文, 功能对等理论与英文歌曲汉译, 企业家天地下半月谈, 2008, 165 (10) : 1-2.