

# A Systematic Literature Review of Film Title Translation

Xiaojing Hu

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

Hazlina Abdul Halim

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

Zaid Mohd Zin

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

**Abstract**—Film titles play a pivotal role in encapsulating films' plot, mood, and character, making them critical for attracting audiences and promoting films effectively. They rightly deserve more extensive and systematic linguistic research. Film title translation study has received much attention from many scholars, and their findings have been published, including translation strategies, linguistic features, and theoretical frameworks applied to film title translation in many languages. Despite extensive research on film title translation, gaps remain, including repetitive content and a lack of interdisciplinary perspectives. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out a systematic literature review of film title translation. This systematic review examines 55 journal articles published between 1993 and 2024, focusing on publication trends, thematic scope, and key findings in the field of film title translation. Utilizing Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines and data from Scopus, Linguistic Abstracts, and Web of Science, the review highlights an increasing trend in multilingual studies involving 18 languages and underscores the limited theoretical advancements and focus on translation challenges. The study shows that few studies have focused on the translation problems of film titles, and theory development is limited. Future research should explore genre-specific film titles and adopt corpus-assisted approaches to better analyze naming patterns and translation strategies.

**Index Terms**—film titles, systematic literature review, translation theory, translation strategy

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Aiello (2014), film is a cultural product. The globalization of cultural products, such as films, has significantly increased their accessibility and distribution worldwide (Peltoniemi, 2015). As the names of a cultural product, film titles are instrumental in marketing and shaping audience perceptions. Bae and Kim (2019) identified film titles as a critical factor influencing box-office performance, with studies such as Chung and Eoh (2019) affirming that over 69% of viewers consider titles “very important” in their movie-watching decisions. Furthermore, Bae and Kim (2019) also revealed that informative titles positively impact box-office revenue, mainly for under-promoted films, where the volume of prerelease media exposure measures promotional activities. Film titles play a multifaceted role in a film's representation and marketing, functioning as para-texts that offer psychological preparation for the audience, visual labels for publicity, and concise summaries of the film's content. As para-texts, film titles provide information about the overall product and serve as a communicative message for the audience, shaping their expectations and preparing them for the viewing experience. Additionally, they act as visual markers for marketing campaigns, such as billboards, to attract attention.

However, the translation of film titles presents unique challenges due to linguistic and cultural differences and external factors such as marketing demands and censorship regulations. Unlike films, titles are particularly prone to manipulation, often under the influence of distributors, marketing teams, or censors rather than remaining solely within the translator's control. This external intervention can significantly shape how local audiences receive the film. Jutronić and Karabatić (2016) define a title as “the name using which a work can be identified” (p. 86), underscoring its fundamental role in the cultural reception of a film. This definition highlights the intrinsic connection between the title and the work it represents. Scholars in translation studies (e.g., Ross, 2013; Ermolenko et al., 2020) have explored the translation of titles as a crucial factor in a film's reception, emphasizing its significance in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps while addressing practical constraints. Despite the growing number of studies in this area, systematic analysis and literature organization still need improvement. Most existing research is narrow in scope, only focusing on using different translation theories to analyze the translation strategies while neglecting the influence of cultural factors and lacking interdisciplinary aspects. Consequently, this study seeks to address these gaps by conducting a systematic review of the literature on film title translation. By doing so, we aim to identify trends, highlight gaps in knowledge, and provide insights for researchers and

practitioners involved in this specialized translation area.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on film title translation reveals a growing interest in understanding how linguistic and cultural elements interact to shape audience reception. With the growing focus on film title research, numerous published studies have explored the combination of various languages. Nevertheless, this study only focuses on the articles about translating film titles written in English. Previous research on the translation of film titles has primarily focused on their characteristics and functions and the translation strategies of film titles. Film titles are generally brief, readable, and informative. For instance, scholars like Iglíkova and Usataya (2019) and Ailan (2016) emphasize the linguistic characteristics of film titles. Iglíkova and Usataya (2019) analyzed the features of English film titles, noting their brevity, clarity, memorability, cultural relatedness, emotional resonance, and marketing function, while Ailan (2016) extended the analysis based on their cultural and aesthetic dimensions by analyzing the characteristics of film titles from the aspects of language, cultural and aesthetic ways, underscoring the complexity of translating such condensed and symbolic texts. Wang et al. (2021) provide comparative insights into animated film titles, demonstrating that Chinese titles often rely on imagery and cultural connotations, while English titles emphasize directness and simplicity. This contrast reflects broader linguistic and cultural tendencies, suggesting that translation strategies must consider functional and aesthetic priorities. Xu (2024) similarly described the adaptability of English film titles, concentrating on their conciseness, understandability, and appeal while emphasizing their dual role as informational and promotional tools.

The functional aspects of film titles have also been a focal point of research. Gabrić et al. (2017) argue that film titles serve dual roles—as identifiers and marketing instruments. This duality necessitates a translation approach that balances semantic fidelity with cultural adaptation. Xu (2024) further emphasizes film titles' emotional and aesthetic resonance, which must be preserved during translation to maintain audience engagement. Several studies explore the application of translation theories to film titles. Skopos theory, for instance, is frequently employed to analyze the purpose-driven nature of translation, advocating for strategies that align with the target audience's cultural and linguistic context (Reiss et al., 2014). Newmark's communicative translation theory emphasizes clarity and audience comprehension, making it particularly relevant for translating culturally nuanced titles (Ailan, 2016). The challenge(s) of translating film titles is another critical area of study. For example, Díaz-Pérez (2008, 2014) and Jutrońić and Karabatić (2016) highlight issues such as puns, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references that complicate the translation process. Díaz Pérez examines the cognitive processes of translating English film titles into Spanish and underscores the difficulty of preserving humor and wordplay in culturally specific Spanish-English film title translations (Díaz Pérez, 2008, 2014). The strategies are summarized as reproducing puns, omitting them, or altering their structure. Jutrońić and Karabatić (2016) add that intertextuality and audience expectations further constrain translation choices.

The interplay between linguistic and cultural factors is further explored through interdisciplinary approaches. For instance, Fuciji (2016) examines the sociolinguistics dimensions of film title translation, focusing on the interaction between various translation strategies employed and their effects on the reception of translated titles in the Romanian market. Such interdisciplinary studies enrich the field by providing broader contextual insights. Likewise, Baea and Kim (2019) explore the marketing function of film titles, highlighting how film titles influence audience perceptions and box-office success. Such interdisciplinary studies have enriched the research perspective of film title translation by providing broader contextual insights. Research on cross-cultural translation strategies reveals significant regional variations. For example, English-language films may have different translated titles in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan despite all three regions sharing Chinese characters. Wong et al. (2023) compare the translation of Hollywood blockbuster titles in Mainland China and Hong Kong, noting that Mainland translations often prioritize literal accuracy, while Hong Kong translations favor creative adaptations that resonate with local audiences. Similarly, Kuang (2023) extends this analysis to include Taiwan, finding that Mainland China tends to translate English titles more directly and conservatively. Hong Kong and Taiwan employ more paraphrased translations with regional linguistic characteristics. In Mainland China, the translation of movie titles is mainly naturalized, while in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the original information is more likely to be retained.

While significant progress has been made, gaps remain in the literature. Few studies examine genre-specific translation strategies, leaving questions about how translation approaches vary across film genres. Similarly, the limited focus on reader reception and the impact of translated titles on audience perceptions highlights the need for more empirical research. Combining corpus-assisted methods and interdisciplinary frameworks offers promising avenues for addressing these gaps. Thus, the following questions will guide the analysis of past studies:

1. What are the general trends in film title translation research?
2. Which languages are most frequently involved in film title translation?
3. What are the key research themes in the study of film title translation?

## III. METHOD

### A. Databases

This systematic literature review was conducted according to the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA

provides a structured approach for identifying research gaps and trends (Ab et al., 2022; Adams & Muthiah, 2020; Johari et al., 2019; Hiver et al., 2024). The process involved three key phases: identification, screening, and eligibility, as detailed below. This review also includes in-depth information on the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to select previous studies, the sources of these studies, and the methodology used to collect and analyze data for the systematic literature review. Articles were sourced from Scopus, Linguistics Abstracts, and Web of Science, chosen for their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed journals in the social sciences and humanities (Steinhardt et al., 2017). The search strategy employed a combination of keywords, including “film titles” and “translation”, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant studies. Scopus and Web of Science complement each other since both are somewhat inclusive (Burnham, 2006). Linguistics Abstracts provides high-quality cover-to-cover indexing and abstracts for journals encompassing the broad spectrum of linguistics and language study. Additional journal articles were identified through Google Scholar searches and by examining references in relevant articles.

### *B. Study Selection*

Keyword searching was applied to the full text to search for relevant studies. The search terms included synonyms, which are “film name\*” OR “movie title\*” OR “movie name\*” OR “cinema title\*” OR “motion picture title\*” OR “film headline\*.” Considering the research questions, the search string in all fields is as follows: (“film title” OR “film titled” OR “film titles”) OR (“film name” OR “film named” OR “film namely”) OR (“movie title” OR “movie titled” OR “movie titles”) OR (“movie name” OR “movie named”) OR “cinema title\*” OR “motion picture title\*” OR “movie headline\*” OR “film headline\*”) AND “translation”. Additionally, manual checking of a list of references was also employed. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are summarized below. Figure 1 illustrates the procedure for identifying and screening studies guided by PRISMA 2020.

### *C. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were set to get all the relevant articles on film title translations. To ensure an accurate and unbiased synthesis, identical criteria were used for all research and the selection process was carefully recorded (Gough & Richardson, 2018). This study examined literature published between 1993 and 2024. This period was chosen because translation studies before 1993 rarely addressed the translation of titles. The studies were deemed eligible based on the following reasons. Firstly, the studies are journal articles because peer-reviewed articles are presumed to maintain higher standards of quality and consistency. Secondly, the studies are written in English since the researchers have an appreciable command of the language involved in this study. It also ensures understanding and accurate representation of global studies. Thirdly, the content focuses on “film titles” and “translation”. Studies were excluded if they met one or more exclusion criteria: (1) The literature consisted of dissertations, conference proceedings, unpublished studies, reviews, or commentaries. (2) Articles in languages other than English. (3) The study was on something other than the translation of film titles.

### *D. Screening Results*

Data was extracted using a thematic analysis method. Information gathered included authors’ names, year of publication, analysis of translation problems, translation strategies, language features of film titles, functions, and the theoretical frameworks adopted in the film title translation. The PRISMA 2020 flowchart in Figure 1 outlines the identification and selection process of studies included in this review.

Figure 1 displays the outcomes of the data screening and collection process. Initially, 960 records were retrieved from three databases: Scopus (n=226), Web of Science (WoS) (n=41), and Linguistic Abstracts (n=693), with an additional 28 records identified through reference searches. After 147 duplicate records were removed, 841 records remained for screening. Of these, 19 records were excluded due to their publication year failing to meet the inclusion criteria, while 67 were eliminated because they were not written in English. An additional 102 records were excluded based on the publication type. 598 records were disqualified for not aligning with the title requirement. In the end, 55 complete articles were evaluated for eligibility. Ultimately, 55 papers were included in this study, which underwent a rigorous content analysis to meet the objectives of this research. After gathering sufficient samples, the data were carefully reviewed and categorized according to critical components of the studies, including research trends, factors, language pairs, applied theories, translation problems, and translation strategies. The results are based on these observations. In total, 55 studies formed the research corpus, and the data were systematically organized in an Excel spreadsheet for clarity and analysis. For further details, please refer to Supplementary Appendix 1. Research string usage date: November 8, 2024.

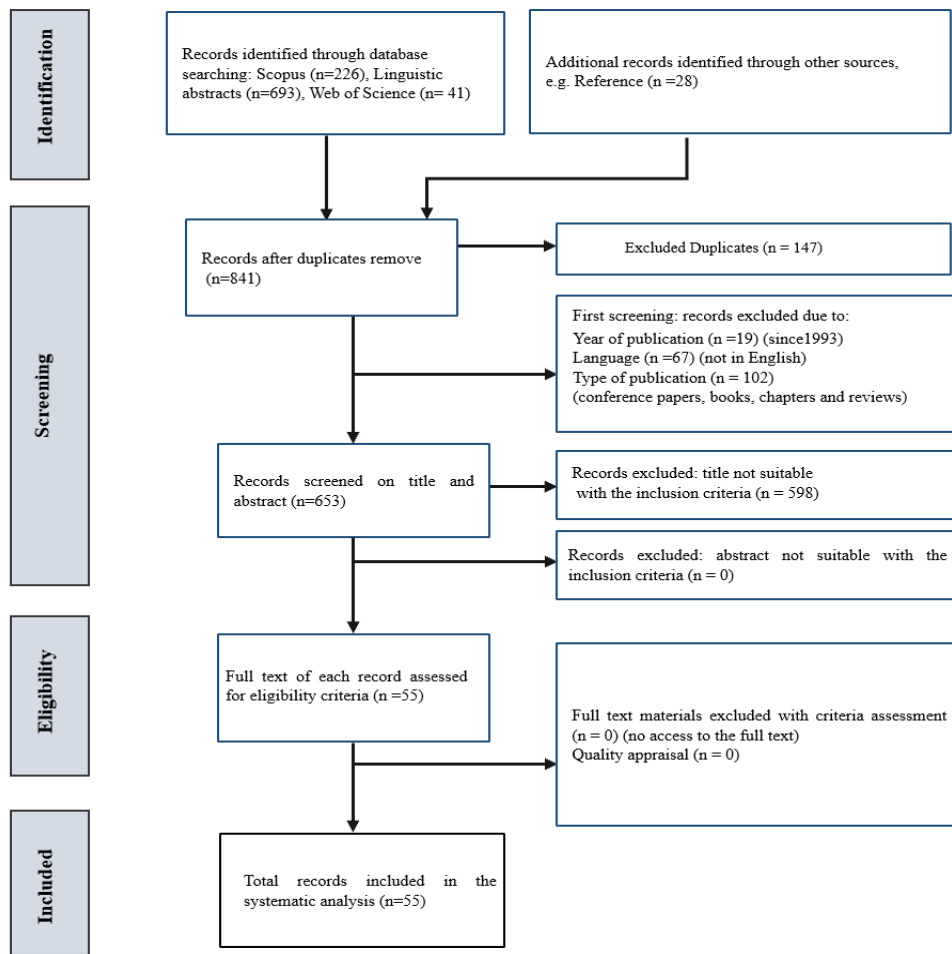


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Chart for Systematic Literature Review

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. General Trend of Film Titles Translation Research

Figure 2 below reflects this growth pattern, showcasing the evolving interest in film title translation. Research on film title translation has shown a fluctuating but increasing trend since 2008, with significant peaks in publication occurring in 2016. From 2008 to 2012, only one article was published in most years. However, it has increased since 2013, although the trend has fluctuated. Even though there are intermittent drops, such as in 2021 and 2023, the field shows recovery and growth. The consistency in research output in recent years, with five articles in 2024, suggests sustained interest in the field. This trend reflects the growing recognition of film title translation as a significant area of inquiry within translation studies, likely driven by globalization and the increasing interplay of linguistic and cultural elements in the media.

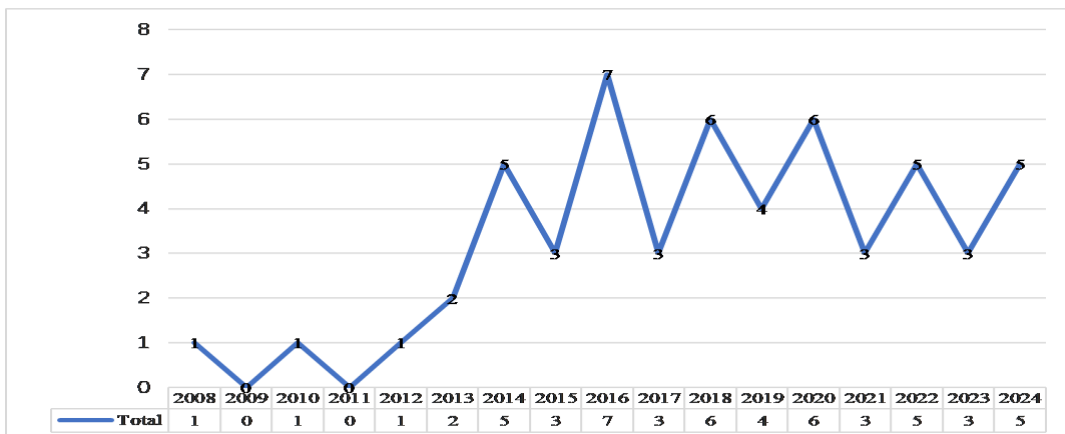


Figure 2. Frequency Diagram of the Selected Articles

*B. Language Pairs Involved in the Film Titles Translation Studies*

As illustrated in Figure 3, there are 25 language pairs in the translation of film title studies. 18 kinds of languages are involved in translating film title studies, so multilingualism is evident here.

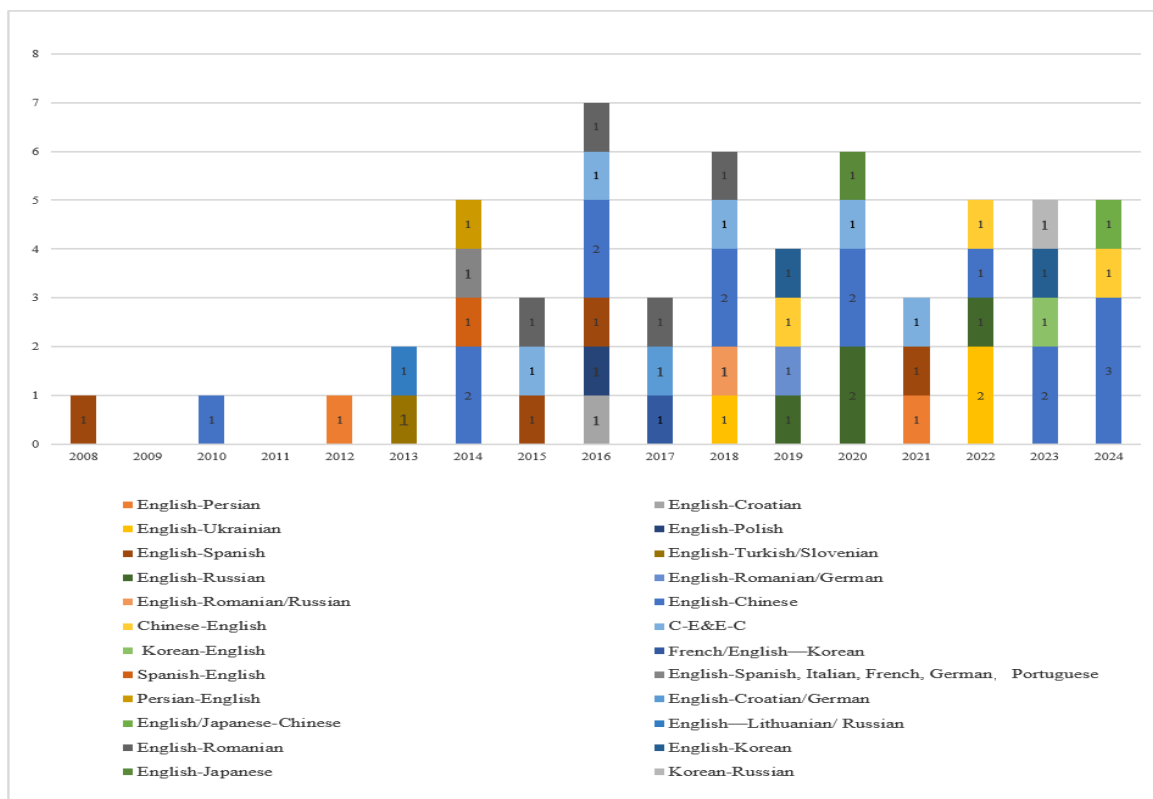


Figure 3. Translation Language Pairs and Their Corresponding Quantities

Note: The article “Film Title as Unit of Translation and Image-sense” by Kolodina and Pashkova involved three language pairs: English to Korean, Korean to English, and Korean to Russian. It was, therefore, counted three times in this figure.

English is the most used source language, and this finding aligns with the fact that English is an international language that serves as a lingua franca worldwide. It also confirms the popularity of films from English-speaking countries throughout the world. Chinese is the most commonly used target language. According to the research, by 2012, China had surpassed Japan to become the largest theatrical market outside the United States. Four years later, in 2016, the number of screens in China exceeded that of the United States (Tartaglione, 2016). As a cultural product, the film has attracted people’s interest in society and academic fields. Most studies focused on the English-Chinese language pair, with 15 articles among them. This situation reflects the growing interest in how English-language film titles are translated into Chinese, driven by the expanding Chinese film market. While English-Chinese translation dominates the field, other language pairs, such as English-Spanish and English-Ukrainian, have also been explored, although these remain less frequent.

*C. Main Research Themes of the Film Titles Translation*

Figure 4 shows that out of 55 studies, the core research areas in film title translation are translation strategies and the 100% (55) of works explored translation strategies of film titles. 71% (39) discussed film title functions, and understanding these functions is essential for accurate and culturally appropriate translations. 9.1% (5) investigated film title translation problems; 12.7% (7) examined the linguistic features of film titles; 27.2% (16) studied the factors affecting film title translation. Research on linguistic features, translation problems, and factors influencing the translation of film titles is rare but still contributes valuable insights. In summary, the film title translation studies cover diverse thematic areas for the period under investigation.

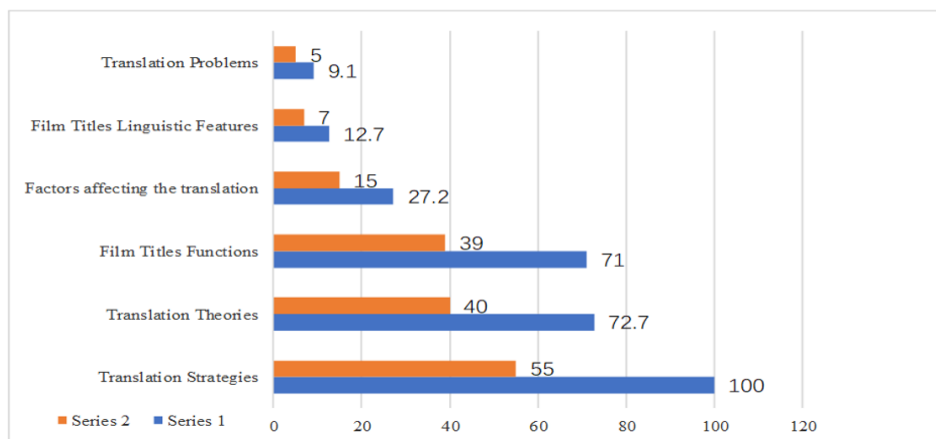


Figure 4. Percentage Distribution of Research Themes of Film Title Translation (Series 1 - percentage frequencies. Series 2 - raw frequencies)

#### D. Linguistic Features and Functions of Film Titles

##### (a). Film Titles Language Features

Studying film titles' language characteristics is essential because specific and clear language characteristics are conducive to translators solving related translation problems more accurately and effectively (Amenador & Wang, 2022). The linguistic features of film titles occupy a certain proportion of translation research. What has been discovered is that different scholars have identified the linguistic features (12.7% of publications) of film titles, emphasizing their role in attracting audiences and reflecting the film plot. Several scholars further emphasized that film titles are typically simple, concise, understandable, attractive, brief, informative, and capable of creating intrigue (Wang & Ji, 2021; Gudmanian & Tsubera, 2022; Xu, 2024). Gabrić et al. (2017) summarized film titles' features in brevity, appellative function, cultural adaptability, genre indication, memorability, and emotional resonance. Similarly, Bai (2018) notes that English film titles exhibit brevity while demonstrating cultural, artistic, and commercial dimensions. Wang and Ji (2021) further identified similarities and differences between the two languages of animated film titles, observing that both share characteristics of simplicity and conciseness. However, they note a key distinction: Chinese animated film titles tend to emphasize imagery, whereas English titles favor directness. Shi (2014) analyzed English film titles' naming patterns and functions, emphasizing their dual role in naming and translation. Gabrić et al. (2017) additionally highlight the advertising function of film titles, linking their brevity and informativeness to their ability to create intrigue. Xu (2024) similarly underscores the diversity and vividness of English film titles while reaffirming their conciseness, understandability, and attractiveness. Overall, the language of film titles can be concise and impactful, designed to encapsulate the essence of the film while attracting audience attention through brevity, informativeness, cultural resonance, and emotional appeal.

##### (b). Functional Classification of Film Titles

Regarding title translation research, research has been carried out on titles' roles and functions. Nord (1995) distinguishes six functions of titles to be considered in the translation process. They can be grouped into two sets: essential and optional functions. Figure 4 shows that the frequency of this category occupies a large proportion, indicating that the function of film titles occupies an essential position in translation research. Scholars have explored these functions from various perspectives, emphasizing their linguistic, cultural, and communicative significance.

Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013) introduce referential, connotative, and poetic functions, focusing on the connection between the title and the narrative, its deeper meaning, and its aesthetic quality. Ross (2013) expands the discussion by identifying film titles' marketing, cultural adaptation, and semantic and pragmatic roles. Similarly, Díaz-Pérez (2014) highlights attention-getting and plot-related functions, emphasizing their importance in engaging audiences. Wang and Ji (2021) and Wong et al. (2023) identify the informative, expressive, aesthetic, vocative, commercial, referential, and appellative functions of film titles, with an emphasis on their informative, expressive, and commercial roles. Building on these foundational studies, Fuciji (2016) further examines the semantic, pragmatic, and functional equivalence in translated film titles, emphasizing their role in reflecting cultural elements and bridging cultural gaps. Peña-Cervel (2016), Bai (2018), Wang and Ji (2021), and Yuan (2022) explore film titles' functions, highlighting their persuasive, informative, aesthetic, expressive, commercial, and emotional roles, as well as their impact on audience engagement and marketing. This demonstrates the multi-layered nature of titles, where artistic and market considerations are prominent. Similarly, Gudmanian and Tsubera (2022) stress the role of film titles in identification, advertising, structuring information, and shaping audience perception, reinforcing their commercial and communicative impact. Early studies, such as Nord (1995), focus on fundamental roles like uniqueness and metatextuality. Subsequent research, for example, Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013), expands these roles to include poetic and connotative qualities. Recent studies, including those by Iglíkova and Usataya (2019) and Kolodina and Pashkova (2023), focus more on culture and audience perception, emphasizing titles' adaptive, semiotic, and cognitive components. These findings underscore the film title's evolving and

multifaceted nature in global cinema.

#### *E. Factors Affecting the Translation of Film Titles*

Factors affecting the translation also have a certain proportion in the research, although the research frequency is relatively low. This type of research may focus on how different cultural backgrounds, audience expectations, market orientation, etc., affect the translation of movie titles. Ross (2013) identifies five key influences on translating film titles from English to Turkish and Slovenian: the diversity of available translation tactics, the cultural background of the target audience, local title translation conventions, commercial considerations, and the international business context. Gabrić et al. (2017) think that cultural and historical processes, linguistic differences, emotional resonance, and market considerations, among others, shape film title translation. Xu (2024) stresses the importance of language, cultural features, aesthetic ideas, and commercial considerations in translating English film titles into Chinese. Similarly, Tan (2015) and Yu (2018) categorize influential factors into cultural and linguistic elements—such as understanding the source language, cultural information in movie titles, and target language constraints—and nonverbal elements, including the commercial function of movie titles and regulatory stipulations. Zabrudska et al. (2022) argue that transformation strategies in translation depend on the original text's dominance density, its relationship to film content, and linguistic barriers. Gudmanian et al. (2022) and Ermolenko (2020) emphasize that strategy choices are shaped by cultural, commercial, aesthetic, lexical, stylistic, pragmatic, and functional factors. Ermolenko further highlights extralinguistic factors such as film company requirements and lingua-cultural barriers, including mismatches between source and target language systems, language norms, and speech customs. Karabatić and Jutronić (2016) and Iglíkova and Usataya (2019) elaborate on factors such as marketing considerations, linguistic challenges (e.g., puns and idioms), cultural differences, audience preferences, intertextuality, franchise recognition, genre, and plot communication. Fakharzadeh (2022) stresses cultural and ideological factors as primary influences in film title translation, highlighting the need for alignment with the target culture's values and ideologies. Zhou (2024) notes that cultural and aesthetic factors significantly impact film title translation. Li (2024) identifies social, cultural-historical, and emotional factors as critical in the Chinese translation of English and Japanese film titles. Bai (2018) and Shi (2014) reinforce the importance of cultural and commercial factors, while Fuciji (2016) focuses on the interplay of cultural and linguistic aspects. In summary, this section has explained the complexity of film title translation because linguistic, cultural, commercial, and aesthetic factors must be considered to meet the expectations of audiences and market demands.

#### *F. Theoretical Application/Approaches to Film Title Translation Studies*

According to Amenador and Wang (2022), the theories adopted in translation studies have effect on the overall orientation of translation and the corresponding strategies used to solve the related problems. Figure 5 indicates that out of the 55 publications, 74% (40) investigated film title translation from various theoretical perspectives, while the remaining 26% (15) did not apply any theory. Studies with no theoretical frameworks emerged throughout the field of film title translation studies. Four of them are about comparative studies of film titles. The two most widely utilized theories in the analyzed studies are Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) Model and the concepts of Domestication and Foreignization (1995), each accounting for 14% of the total.

Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) Model emphasizes the systematic analysis of translation strategies and the practical methods translators can use to bridge linguistic and cultural differences between the source and target languages. Domestication and Foreignization focus on how much source culture should be retained or adapted for the target audience. This implies that scholars advocate considering the audience-centered approaches in film title translation. The Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989) and Eco-translatology Theory (Hu, 2011) are the second most frequently employed theories, each accounting for 7% of the total studies. This indicates that scholars emphasize the importance of the text's function. The Skopos Theory (1989) emphasizes the translation's purpose (or function) in the target context, which is especially relevant in film title translation.

On the other hand, Eco-translatology Theory (2011) concentrates on three-dimensional transformation, including linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. These theories examine whether a translation should adapt the film title to suit the target culture (domestication) or retain aspects of the source culture (foreignization), showing a clear preference for function- and culture-oriented approaches. Other frameworks used in the studies included Polysystem Theory (Even-Zohar, 1990), Functional Translation Theory (Nord, 1997), Relevance Theory (Gutt, 1991), Cognitive Linguistics (Schäffner, 2000), Adaptation Theory (Bastin, 2000), etc. These frameworks highlight the complexity of film title translation, acknowledging the importance of cultural contexts and the retention of humor or puns, mainly when translating for specific markets.

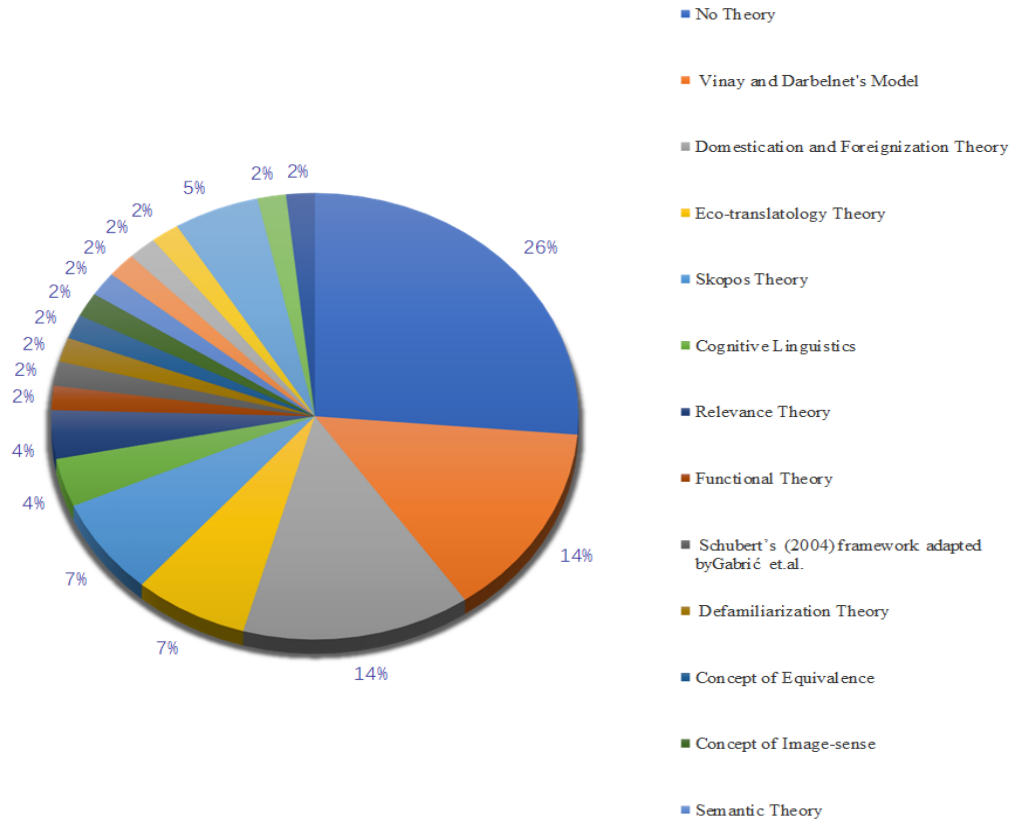


Figure 5. Translation Theories Found in Film Titles

G. Analysis of Translation Problems Found in Film Titles Translation

Problems in translation occur when “something has gone wrong during the transfer and movement from ST to TT” (Hansen, 2010, p. 385). Translation issues or errors in film titles stem from the relationship between the source text and the target text. These errors can be categorized differently depending on the theoretical framework applied. Although few studies have been published on translation problems, they remain in research. This part of the research may focus on exploring the difficulties and challenges encountered in the translation process of film titles, such as translation barriers caused by cultural differences, language habits, market demand, etc. Although the frequency is not as high as the translation strategy and function categories, this research direction provides a theoretical basis for solving the difficulties in actual translation. According to Dynel (2010), among the most recurrent problems in translations of film titles are puns, humor, proper names, culture-specific content, such as references to other films and literature, etc., lack of semantic equivalents, and lexico-syntactic problems. Díaz-Pérez (2008, 2014) discussed the difficulty in translating wordplay or puns in film title translations. Jutonić and Karabatić (2016) believe the challenges of translating film titles are as follows: puns and double meaning, character references, cultural references and idioms, ambiguity, wordplay through embedding the sequel number in the title, and intertextuality. Wook-Dong (2017) lists the difficulties of film titles from English to Korean, including words with multiple meanings (homonyms and heteronyms), slang and colloquial expressions, words with culturally specific features, and proper nouns and common nouns. Table 1 presents a classification of the translation problems found in the translation of film titles, and Table 2 highlights examples of translation challenges. The challenges of film title translations can be classified into linguistics, contextual and pragmatics, and cultural translation errors. To address the existing translation problems in film titles, some scholars have proposed certain principles, strategies, and methods, as discussed below.

TABLE 1  
SUMMARY OF FILM TITLE TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

Linguistic Challenges	Puns and Wordplay Ambiguity and Multiple Meanings Alliteration and Rhyming
Cultural Challenges	Culture-Specific References (Proper Names, Idioms, Allusions, Intertextuality) Differences in Source Text and Target Text Cultural Background
Contextual & Pragmatic Challenges	Grasp the Main Theme or Emotional Tone Commercial Influence Adapt to Target Audience Expectations Balance Creativity and Fidelity

TABLE 2  
SOME EXAMPLES OF FILM TITLE TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

Challenge types	Source text with challenges	Target text	Explanations
Puns/Wordplay	<i>Days of thunder</i>	<i>Días de Trueno</i>	In English, “thunder” signifies both the natural phenomenon of sound following lightning and the engine roar associated with car racing. The Spanish title only conveys the first of those meanings.
Culture-Specific References	叶问 ( <i>Ye Wen</i> )	<i>Ip Man</i>	The film’s main character, Ip Man, was raised in Guangdong Province; his name is transliterated into English based on its Cantonese pronunciation. Therefore, the film’s title retains the phonetic elements of the source language. This strategy reveals the character’s regional and cultural identity. And promotes a deeper cultural resonance for international audiences.
Balance, Creativity and Fidelity	<i>Lolita</i>	一树梨花压海棠 / <i>Jat Syu Lei Faa Aat Hoi Tong</i>	This line originates from a traditional Chinese folk story, in which the white pear blossoms symbolize an old man with white hair, while the red crabapple flowers represent a young and pretty lady. The phrase is commonly used to criticize the phenomenon of older men marrying younger women. In the context of the film, this metaphor echoes the plot of the movie about a middle-aged man who is a pedophile who marries an underage girl.

#### H. Principles and Strategies of Film Title Translation

Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002) define a translation strategy as “the procedure used by the translator to resolve problems that arise during the translation process, with a specific goal in mind” (p. 508). Scholars have proposed translation principles, strategies, and methods to address the existing translation problems in film titles. Some scholars have proposed many principles and strategies based on the target context’s features, purposes, functions, and translation difficulties. Among them, Shi (2014) proposed the translation principles according to the characteristics of English film titles: the artistic, cultural transformation, and commercial and entertainment principles. Some scholars think translators should follow the principles of Skopos Theory, such as the Skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule, as much as possible, and the translation strategies of film titles based on this theory are transliteration, literal translation, literal translation, complementary translation, and creative translation (Mei, 2010; Zhang et al., 2019; Zhou, 2024). Yu (2018) proposed literal translation, transliteration, and free translation and provided a new title combination of the translating techniques for translating film titles based on Functional Theory (Nord, 1997). Fakharzadeh (2021) employed Schubert’s (2004) Framework, which was adapted by Gabrić et al., the objective being to analyze the translation strategies used in film title translation. They are direct translation, transcription substitution, free addition, free subtraction, free shift, free substitution, transcreation, transcription complete, and transcription addition. It can be found that translation strategies are functional-oriented, based on the purpose, function, or intent effect in the target language. The following section concerns the strategies used to focus on language-level aspects of translation. One of the models worth mentioning about the translation approach to address the film title translation problem is Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) model, which emphasizes translation procedures as tools for addressing differences between source and target languages. This model is the most used model of film title translation among the selected articles. Many other scholars have proposed principles or criteria based on this model; for example, Lotfollahi and Moinzadeh (2012) think the translation of film titles should follow the procedures based on Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) model and Newmark’s model, including borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, transcription, through-translation, cultural equivalent, translation label, translation couplets, translation triplets, deletion, and Naturalization. Similarly, Šidiškytė et al. (2013) analyzed the translation of film titles under the guidance of Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) model, and the results show that literal translation, transcreation, and modulation were the most widely applied translation procedures. Ross (2013), Shokri (2014), and Fuciji (2016) applied Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) framework to film title translation. Ross (2013) focused on transposition and modulation, while Shokri (2014) categorized strategies into preservation and modification. Fuciji (2016) emphasized faithfulness, cultural awareness, and commercial-aesthetic balance, proposing various adaptation strategies. Other scholars have examined the challenging elements of film title translation. Díaz-Pérez (2008, 2014), Jutronić and Karabatić (2016), and Вавринюк (2018) explored challenges in translating film title wordplay, including puns, cultural references, ambiguity, and intertextuality. They proposed strategies such as retaining one meaning, using descriptive equivalents, adding sequence numbers, word-for-word translation, transformation, and replacement based on Semantic Theory (1985). Some scholars have proposed the following strategies for film title translation based on Domestication and Foreignization Theory (1995): literal translation, free translation, transliteration, semi-transliteration, zero translation, reproduction/transference, graphic adaptation/naturalization, functional equivalent, paraphrase/description/definition, expansion, reduction, the combination of free translation and transliteration, the combination of literal translation and free translation (Shi, 2014; Tan, 2015; Surdyk et al., 2016; Gabrić et al., 2017; Tsoi, 2022; Yuan, 2022; Xu, 2024). These translation strategies are used from a cultural perspective for the film titles. It is obvious that scholars have put forward different translation principles and translation strategies for translating film titles from different source languages and targeted languages, depending on the various challenges, functions, and theoretical frameworks explored. What emerges as a clear and reasonable practice is that the type of strategies to adopt should align with the purpose of the translation, the cultural and linguistic nuances of the target audience, and the creative demands of

the film title. Furthermore, it is apparent that the strategies employed for film title translation, as per the data under review, are closely inferred from the diverse theories employed in these studies, reflecting the interplay between linguistic precision, cultural adaptation, and functional considerations. In summary, the translation principles and translation strategies offer translators rules to follow in translating film titles. A summary of the translation principles and strategies is presented in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3  
TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES/CRITERIA AND STRATEGIES FOR FILM TITLE TRANSLATION

Principles	the translation should be target-language-oriented. the translation should be aesthetic. the translation should be consistent with the content of the film.
Criteria	Faithfulness, cultural awareness, commercial, aesthetic effects, artistic value.
Translation strategies for titles with cultural challenges	Borrowing; literal Translation; adaptation; transcreation
Translation strategies for titles with Linguistic challenges	Domestication; foreignization; cultural Substitution; non-translation
Translation strategies for titles with pragmatic challenges	functional equivalence; communication translation; literal vs. free translation

The research presented synthesized data from 55 publications to examine the film titles' translation studies written in English. The study of film title translation has been on the ascendant. Many results have been achieved despite some limitations. We have found that the film title translation studies cover diverse thematic areas for the period under investigation. English is the most used source language in film title translation. Among the main research themes of film title translation, the language of film titles can be essentially concise and impactful, designed to encapsulate the essence of the film while attracting audience attention through brevity, informativeness, cultural resonance, and emotional appeal. The film's title functions are evolving and showing a multifaceted nature worldwide. The linguistic, cultural, commercial, and aesthetic factors should be considered to meet audiences' expectations and market demands in film title translation. Film titles' linguistic features and functions posed many challenges in their translation. As a result, several strategies have been put forward to address the problems. Researchers have used many translation theories as guidance to discuss the translation problems and have given suggested principles and strategies for translating film titles. According to Figure 5, the four most used theories are Vinay and Darbelnet's Model (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995), the Domestication and Foreignization Theory (Venuti, 1995), the Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989), and the theory of Eco-translatology (Hu, 2011). Furthermore, few studies have examined how readers perceive film title translation, despite the potential for such feedback to enhance functional translation outcomes. Therefore, many methods like questionnaire surveys, case sampling, and semi-structured interviews of film titles should be adopted to understand the foreign audiences' perspectives.

## V. CONCLUSION

This systematic review underscores the critical role of film titles in global cinema, highlighting their linguistic, cultural, and economic significance. Film title translation represents a complex interplay of language, culture, and commercial considerations, where translation strategies must balance fidelity to the original text with the cultural expectations of the target audience. While significant progress has been made in this research area, the field remains constrained by limited theoretical diversity, genre-specific exploration, and methodological approaches. Expanding research to include non-English studies, genre-specific analyses, and interdisciplinary frameworks will enhance academic understanding and practical applications in film title translation. The dominance of English-to-Chinese translation studies highlights the importance of addressing multilingual diversity in future research. Expanding the scope to include underrepresented language pairs and genres could yield valuable insights into translation practices across diverse cultural contexts. Future research should also prioritize corpus-assisted approaches to manage large databases and interdisciplinary methodologies to bridge the gap between linguistic analysis and practical application. Incorporating audience reception studies will provide critical feedback to refine translation strategies and better align them with market demands and cultural resonance. By addressing these challenges, the field of film title translation can make significant strides in academic understanding and practical effectiveness, contributing to the global success of cinematic works.

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**Xiaojing Hu** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. She received her M.A. in Translation and Interpretation from Sichuan International Studies University. Her primary areas of interest are cross-cultural studies and corpus translation studies.

**Hazlina Abdul Halim** is an associate professor at Universiti Putra Malaysia. She post-doctorated in Linguistics at the Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. She received her PhD in Malay Language from Universiti Putra Malaysia and her M.A. in Modern Language from Universiti Malaya. Her research fields include applied linguistics, French studies, and Translation studies. Email: [hazlina\\_ah@upm.edu.my](mailto:hazlina_ah@upm.edu.my)

**Zaid Bin Mohd** is a senior lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. His main research interests are Japanese Language and Linguistics and Comparative Study of Malay and Japanese Language.