

English Subtitling Strategies for Mythological Names and Titles in Beijing Opera Film: A Case Study of *Havoc in Heaven*

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Abstract—This paper examines the English subtitling strategies employed for mythological names and titles in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*, using Gottlieb's subtitling strategies as the theoretical framework. The study adopts a qualitative research design and employs a case study approach to identify and categorise mythological names and titles into four groups: names of people, names of objects, names of places, and official titles. The study's analysis reveals that the most frequently used subtitling strategy is transfer (37%), followed by expansion (22%), condensation (17%), paraphrase (13%), and transcription (11%). The predominant use of transfer indicates a high preference for direct translations that preserve the original meaning and form, ensuring both cultural and narrative fidelity. The notable application of both expansion and paraphrase strategies highlights the effort to bridge cultural gaps and improve international audiences' comprehension. Condensation ensures readability and accessibility within the constraints of subtitle formatting; Meanwhile, transcription preserves the phonetic integrity of the original names. This balanced approach not only allows the film to be appreciated globally, but it also provides insights into Chinese mythology and culture while still maintaining the original essence of the overall narrative. The findings enhance understanding of subtitling strategies for culturally rich content and inform audiovisual translation practice. They also advance research on mythological name translation and the subtitling of culturally embedded Chinese opera films.

Index Terms—subtitling strategies, mythological names and titles, Beijing opera film

I. INTRODUCTION

Subtitling has become a crucial element of audiovisual translation, especially for films that cross cultural and linguistic boundaries (Cintas & Remael, 2007; Gottlieb, 1992; Pedersen, 2011). The challenge of subtitling is further complicated when dealing with content that is heavily saturated with cultural references, such as mythological names and titles. *Havoc in Heaven* is a prominent Beijing Opera film and the only mythological adaptation among the 21 productions in the Beijing Opera Film Project. It also includes the most extensive use of mythological names found in Chinese opera films to date. It offers a unique case study for examining the subtitling strategies used to translate mythological names and titles, which are deeply embedded in Chinese cultural and historical contexts.

The Chinese opera film (*xìqǔpiàn*, meaning "traditional opera film") is one of the most unique forms in world cinema (Gao, 2005; Teo, 2013). It is the combination of traditional Chinese opera and modern cinematography, rich in cultural connotations, which poses a significant challenge for English subtitling. In this paper, *Havoc in Heaven* is part of the Beijing Opera Film Project, which aims to preserve and promote traditional Beijing opera by adapting it into films (Han

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& Tong, 2018). Beijing opera (Peking opera), known as the national opera of China, is the most influential and representative opera in the country (Gao, 2005). *Havoc in Heaven* has been nominated for the Best Opera Film Award at the 33rd China Golden Rooster Awards and won the 'Art Contribution Award' at the Chinese Film Week of the 33rd Tokyo International Film Festival (Shen, 2020). *Havoc in Heaven* is a prominent feature of Chinese opera, embodying a plethora of mythical names and titles with deep cultural significance. Striving for accessibility and comprehension by a global audience, while still being faithful to the source material, is a major challenge that subtitling must face. *Havoc in Heaven* is based on a segment of the first classic Chinese mythological novel, *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en, which tells the story of Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, who rebels and clashes against the Jade Emperor in heaven (Cai, 2006). This narrative is central to Chinese culture and has been translated into many languages and adapted into a wide range of media, including cartoons, books, opera, and films around the world.

This article investigates the subtitling strategies used for the mythological names and titles found in *Havoc in Heaven*. Drawing on the contributions of scholars such as Newmark (1988), Hermans (1988), Gottlieb (1992), Coates-Stephens (1992), Pedersen (2011, 2018), and House (1997), this study both identifies and categorises mythological names and titles into four main types: names of people, names of places, names of objects, and official titles. Given both the cultural specificity and symbolic significance of the names within the source text, each type showcases new and unique hurdles for translators to overcome.

This analysis adopts Gottlieb's (1992) typology of subtitling strategies as its theoretical framework, offering a comprehensive lens through which to examine the linguistic and cultural constraints inherent in subtitle translation. The typology includes ten distinct strategies: expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation. These strategies offer a structured method for analysing how mythological names and titles are handled in subtitles; this ensures that the cultural and narrative integrity of the original film is maintained as much as possible.

By applying Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies to the case study of *Havoc in Heaven*, a Beijing opera film, this paper aims to reveal the effectiveness of various subtitling strategies for translating culturally rooted mythological names and titles. This analysis offers insights into the complexities of audiovisual translation and highlights the careful balance required to convey the rich cultural heritage embedded in mythological references to a global audience.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews key research on subtitling strategies for mythological names and titles in Beijing opera films. The literature review begins by outlining the key constraints in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) to establish the context for this study. It then presents Gottlieb's typology of subtitling strategies, which addresses the practical challenges inherent in AVT. The review further examines the translation of proper names and titles, as well as mythological names and titles, and concludes by identifying gaps in the existing literature.

A. Constraints in Audiovisual Translation (AVT)

Subtitling is a fundamental component of AVT that involves transcribing spoken dialogue, musical lyrics, and other auditory information into written text displayed on screen (Díaz-Cintas, 2018; Gottlieb, 1992; Gambier, 2003). As a specialised field within AVT, subtitling faces unique challenges due to strict space and time constraints (Han, 2019; Tian, 2023). These constraints necessitate a balance between text condensation, synchronisation with audiovisual elements, and cultural adaptation, while maintaining readability for the audience.

One of the primary challenges in subtitling is the constraint on the number of characters that can appear on screen at any given time. Subtitles typically permit a maximum of 35 to 45 characters per line, with most subtitles consisting of no more than two lines (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, 2021; Gottlieb, 1994; Karamitroglou, 1998). This restricts the amount of information conveyed, often requiring subtitlers to condense the spoken dialogue. As noted by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), one of the main difficulties in subtitling lies in the need to condense the text. Subtitlers must distil dialogue to its essence, omitting or paraphrasing parts without losing the original meaning. This process involves complex decision-making, as subtitlers must prioritise certain elements of the message, which may influence the viewer's comprehension.

Moreover, subtitles are also constrained by time. The dialogue must synchronise with on-screen action, and each subtitle must remain on screen long enough to be read comfortably, but not so long that it disrupts audiovisual rhythm (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2018). Typically, subtitles are displayed for 1 to 2 seconds per line, with speed dependent on dialogue pace (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021; Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). As Gottlieb (1992) points out, subtitles need to be synchronized with the timing of the spoken dialogue on screen, but in fast-paced scenes, subtitlers must prioritise essential information, sometimes omitting less critical dialogue. This constraint becomes particularly challenging during overlapping speech or rapid exchanges, where brevity and clarity are paramount.

Furthermore, synchronisation and readability are closely interdependent challenges in subtitling. Subtitle text must align with dialogue and match the rhythm of the on-screen action. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) observe that effective timing is closely linked to the readability of subtitles. As poor timing can lead to rushed reading or narrative disruption. The ideal reading speed for subtitles is around 13 to 15 characters per second (Ferriol, 2004), ensuring viewers absorb

information without strain. However, this pace must be carefully calibrated, especially in scenes with rapid or complex dialogue, to ensure viewers can follow the plot.

In addition, subtitles contend with cultural adaptation, particularly when source material contains culturally specific references, idiomatic expressions, or humour that may not translate directly into the target language. Abdelaal (2019) contends that subtitling culturally specific content involves finding a balance between staying true to the source and ensuring it is understandable for the target audience. Similarly, Liu et al. (2024) highlight the necessity of free translation, substitution, and omission for culture-loaded words in opera. Subtitlers must decide whether to retain, adapt, or omit culturally specific elements, decisions that significantly influence how the target audience interprets the message. For official titles deeply ingrained in culture, cultural substitution is commonly employed, as exemplified by terms such as *chéng xiàng* (“prime minister”) and *fū mǎ* (“King’s son-in-law”) (Liu et al., 2025). Both cultural adaptation and substitution assist subtitlers in navigating cultural divergence.

In conclusion, subtitling within AVT is a specialised and challenging task that requires balancing space and time limitations, synchronisation, readability, and cultural accuracy. Subtitlers must condense dialogues effectively while maintaining the integrity of the original message and considering technical constraints. They must also navigate cultural adaptation, adding further layers of interpretative decision-making. These challenges underscore the complexity of emphasising the crucial role of both technological tools and human oversight in producing high-quality translations. Translators must produce concise yet accurate translations that convey the original meaning while maintaining cultural context (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, 2018, 2021; Pedersen, 2011).

B. Gottlieb’s Typology of Subtitling Strategies

A range of strategies has been developed to address the constraints of subtitling, with Gottlieb’s (1992) typology offering a comprehensive framework for effectively managing these challenges. These strategies, outlined in Table 1, help ensure that subtitles are accurate and culturally appropriate, enhancing the accessibility of the translated content. Translators must carefully balance brevity with meaning, cultural relevance, and narrative integrity.

TABLE 1
GOTTLIEB’S TYPOLOGY OF SUBTITLING STRATEGIES

Strategy	Description
Expansion	Adding information to clarify the meaning for the target audience.
Paraphrase	Rephrasing the original text to fit the subtitle constraints.
Transfer	Directly translating the source text while maintaining content and form.
Imitation	Retaining the original form of names and cultural references.
Transcription	Capturing the phonetic or stylistic aspects of the original text.
Dislocation	Adapting the text to make it culturally relevant for the target audience.
Condensation	Reducing the length of the text while retaining the essential meaning.
Decimation	Omitting less important parts for subtitle conciseness.
Deletion	Removing non-essential sections entirely.
Resignation	Omitting sections that cannot be satisfactorily translated.

Gottlieb’s (1992) typology of subtitling strategies is particularly well-suited to this study, as it effectively addresses the core challenges of space, time, synchronisation, and cultural adaptation inherent in subtitling. His framework provides practical techniques for managing text condensation, ensuring subtitles remain concise yet meaningful, an essential consideration given the strict space limitations discussed earlier. Additionally, his strategies, such as reduction and paraphrase, are directly applicable to time constraints, ensuring that subtitles fit within the brief window of display time while maintaining the core message (Gottlieb, 1992).

Furthermore, Gottlieb’s focus on synchronisation between subtitles and the audiovisual content aligns with the study’s emphasis on maintaining the rhythm and timing of the dialogue (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007). His strategies also offer solutions for cultural adaptation, assisting subtitlers in effectively navigating the challenge of translating cultural references effectively, as noted by Abdelaal (2019). In sum, Gottlieb’s approach provides a balanced and flexible framework that efficiently addresses both the technical and linguistic complexities of subtitling, rendering it an ideal model for this study.

C. Translating Proper Names and Titles

Another significant aspect of subtitling involves the translation of proper names, such as personal names, geographical locations, and titles, which present unique challenges. These elements often carry deep cultural, historical, and contextual significance, requiring careful attention in translation. Scholars like Newmark (1988) and Hermans (1988) emphasise the importance of cultural considerations in translating names. Newmark (1988) identifies transference—the retention of the original name—as a prominent strategy that ensures the preservation of cultural or historical connotations. For instance, the name *Shakespeare* is typically retained in translation, preserving its cultural and literary significance. Functional equivalence, another strategy, involves preserving the role or status conveyed by a name, even if its form is altered. For example, translating “Duke” may require selecting culturally analogous terms such as *Príncipe* or *Comte*, depending on the target culture and context.

Thus, Hermans (1988) adopts a narrative-oriented approach, emphasising that the translation of proper names can shape readers’ perceptions of characters and settings. He identifies strategies such as copying, transcription, substitution,

and translation. Such decisions influence the narrative's ideological framework and affect how audiences engage with the text (Nyangeri & Wangari, 2019). Hermans highlights that names function as powerful cultural symbols, and their translation demands a careful balance between linguistic precision and narrative coherence.

Building on this, Coates-Stephens (1992) delves into translating proper names within literary and mythological contexts, noting their symbolic and historical layers. For instance, mythological names such as *Apollo* carry connotations that transcend language, symbolising cultural archetypes and shared historical narratives. Translators must consider cultural adaptation or explanation to preserve these connotations. Similarly, Pedersen (2011) extends Gottlieb's strategies to AVT, highlighting how space and time constraints affect the translation of names. Strategies such as transference, cultural substitution, and simplification assist subtitlers in maintaining accuracy while adapting names to fit subtitle limitations.

Proper names in AVT function as dynamic cultural elements. The choice to retain, adapt, or omit a name depends on its cultural and narrative significance. Pedersen (2011) emphasises the importance of preserving narrative coherence while respecting AVT's technical constraints. Translating proper names requires subtitlers to navigate between maintaining cultural authenticity and ensuring accessibility for audiences.

D. Translating Mythological Names and Titles

Subtitling mythological names and titles presents particular challenges due to their deep-rooted cultural and symbolic meanings. These references often embody national identity, history, and values, compelling translators to preserve their essence while ensuring accessibility for international audiences.

In Chinese mythology, names such as the Monkey King (*Sūn Wù Kōng*) and the Jade Emperor (*Yù Dì*) carry profound cultural symbolism. Translators must decide whether to maintain these names in their original forms, adapt them, or provide explanations. Huang (2011) emphasises that mythological names are not merely linguistic markers but are also culturally and philosophically laden symbols. Translators must integrate philosophical traditions such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism to ensure translations resonate with target audiences. For example, the name "Jade Emperor" (*Yù Dì*) must convey its Taoist spiritual significance while remaining accessible to non-Chinese audiences.

Thus, the subtitles of *Havoc in Heaven's* Palace reveal that subtitling mythological names requires careful attention to ethical translation principles (OpenSubtitles.org, n.d.). For instance, "Yáo Chí" (瑶池) is often translated as "the Jade Pool," but this may mislead audiences into associating it solely with jade, whereas it more accurately symbolises nobility and the fairyland. To preserve cultural accuracy, translators might opt for alternatives such as "Yao Pond" or include contextual information.

Greek mythology offers a contrasting example, with names like *Zeus* and *Medusa* retaining their original forms in Western cinema. These names are often well-known, allowing translators to preserve their mythological significance without the need for additional explanation. However, when cultural frameworks differ, subtitlers must balance literal translation with contextual adaptation to ensure audience comprehension. For example, Kovalyov (2024) discusses how films like *Clash of the Titans* adapt mythological figures to modern audiences while retaining their cultural significance.

A proposed translation pattern for mythological names involves combining Cantonese Pinyin, liberal English translation, and background information (Wang et al., 2022). This approach ensures both linguistic fidelity and cultural resonance. Similarly, Du (2019) and Zhong (2019) argue that semiotic analysis is essential for translating mythological names. Mythological names function as cultural signifiers, carrying symbolic and historical layers. Translators must decode these layers and identify equivalents that evoke comparable associations in the target language. This ensures that mythological references retain their narrative and cultural impact. Contrastingly, Xie and Zhao (2023) explore naturalisation and alienation strategies in translating mythological names in audiovisual materials. Naturalisation modifies cultural references to better suit the target audience, enhancing accessibility, while alienation retains the foreignness of the source culture. The authors caution that overemphasising either strategy risks diminishing cultural authenticity or confusing audiences. A balanced approach ensures mythological names maintain their symbolic power while remaining comprehensible.

E. Gaps in the Literature

Despite extensive research on subtitling strategies and the translation of mythological names, studies focusing specifically on Beijing opera films remain limited. The unique challenges posed by this genre, such as its rich cultural symbolism, complex narratives, and technical constraints, remain underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by analysing subtitling strategies for mythological names in *Havoc in Heaven*, offering insights into approaches that preserve both the cultural and narrative integrity in Beijing opera films.

III. METHODOLOGY

Drawing on Gottlieb's (1992) typology of subtitling strategies as the theoretical framework, the research methodology is designed to systematically analyse the subtitling techniques employed in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*. This section outlines the research design, data collection, and analytical procedures used in the study.

A. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design employing a case study approach, deemed particularly appropriate for an in-depth examination of the complex subtitling strategies applied to mythological names and titles. Qualitative research emphasises the understanding of phenomena within their specific contexts, making it ideal for examining culturally rich and context-dependent elements such as mythological names (Creswell, 2013). The case study method, in particular, facilitates a detailed and holistic examination of a single instance or bounded system (Yin, 2014), such as the subtitling of mythological names in *Havoc in Heaven*. This allows for a thorough examination of the subtitling process and the cultural considerations involved in translating mythological names and titles in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*.

B. Data Collection

The data for this study comprises the subtitles from the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*, which is the sole film addressing mythology within the Beijing Opera Film Project and contains the greatest number of mythological names among the Chinese opera films to date. The film was selected due to its rich use of mythological names and titles, which are integral to its narrative and cultural identity. The following steps were taken to collect the data:

(1). *Selection of the film: Havoc in Heaven* is a renowned Beijing Opera film and the only mythological adaptation among the 21 films in the Beijing Opera Film Project. It also contains the highest number of mythological names in the Chinese opera films to date. As such, it serves as a valuable case study for analysing the subtitling strategies employed to translate mythological names and titles that are deeply rooted in Chinese cultural and historical contexts.

(2). *Subtitle extraction:* The subtitles were extracted from the film using the subtitle extraction software *Subtitle Edit*. Both the original Chinese subtitles and their corresponding English translations were collected for analysis.

(3). *Identification of mythological names and titles:* The subtitles were systematically reviewed to identify instances of names and titles with mythological significance. These were subsequently categorised into four types: names of people, names of places, names of objects, and official titles.

C. Analytical Procedures

The analysis employs a detailed examination of the subtitling strategies used to translate mythological references, such as names and titles, using Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies framework as the analytical foundation. The following procedures were employed:

(1). *Categorisation of subtitling strategies:* Each identified instance of a mythological name or title within the subtitles was categorised according to Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies: expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation.

(2). *Contextual analysis:* The context in which each name or title appeared was examined to interpret its cultural and narrative significance. This contextual analysis informed the evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the subtitling strategy used.

(3). *Comparative analysis:* The original Chinese names and titles were compared with their English translations to evaluate how effectively the subtitling strategies preserved their cultural and symbolic meanings.

By systematically analysing the subtitling strategies used within *Havoc in Heaven*, this study aims to shed light on the complexities involved in translating mythologically rooted names and titles within audiovisual media. These findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of how subtitling can effectively convey culturally embedded references to a global audience.

IV. RESULTS

This study identified a total of 54 instances related to mythological names and titles, comprising eight examples of names of people, nine examples of objects, nine examples of places, and 28 examples of official titles. The subtitling strategies were manually counted and are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Each table highlights the frequency and corresponding percentage of each strategy applied in Gottlieb's subtitling strategies of mythological names and titles in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*. Firstly, Table 2 presents the distribution of strategies used for translating mythological names of people. Table 3 illustrates the percentage of these strategies applied to mythological names of objects. Subsequently, Table 4 demonstrates the proportion of subtitling strategies used for mythological names of places, and Table 5 focuses on official titles with mythological significance. Finally, Table 6 provides a comprehensive overview of the overall distribution of Gottlieb's subtitling strategies across all categories. The subsequent sections will examine these findings in greater detail.

A. The Result of the Mythological Names of People

Table 2 presents the distribution of Gottlieb's subtitling strategies used for mythological names of people in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*. The table highlights the frequency and corresponding percentage of each strategy applied. Transcription emerges as the most frequently used strategy, with 5 occurrences, accounting for 62.5% of the total. Condensation, paraphrase, and transfer each occur once, representing 12.5% of the total, respectively. Overall, transcription is the predominant strategy in the subtitling of mythological names of people, with the other three strategies utilised to a significantly lesser extent.

TABLE 2
THE PERCENTAGE OF GOTTLIEB'S SUBTITLING STRATEGIES USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES OF PEOPLE

Subtitling strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Transcription	5	62.5
condensation	1	12.5
Paraphrase	1	12.5
Transfer	1	12.5

B. The Result of the Mythological Names of Objects

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of Gottlieb's subtitling strategies employed for mythological names of objects in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*. The table displays the frequency and corresponding percentage of each utilised strategy. Expansion and paraphrase are the most frequently employed strategies, each occurring three times and representing 33.33% of the total. Transfer is used twice, accounting for 22.22%, while condensation appears once, constituting 11.12% of the total. Overall, expansion and paraphrase are the prominent strategies for subtitling mythological names of objects, utilised equally often. Transfer and condensation are also applied, albeit less frequently.

TABLE 3
THE PERCENTAGE OF GOTTLIEB'S SUBTITLING STRATEGIES USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES OF OBJECTS

Subtitling strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Expansion	3	33.33
Paraphrase	3	33.33
Transfer	2	22.22
Condensation	1	11.12

C. The Result of the Mythological Names of Places

Table 4 displays the distribution of Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies used for mythological names of places in *Havoc in Heaven*. It highlights the frequency and corresponding percentage of each strategy applied. Transfer is the most frequently used strategy, occurring five times and representing 55.56% of the total. Expansion and condensation are each used twice, accounting for 22.22% respectively. In summary, transfer is the predominant strategy for subtitling the mythological names of places, followed equally by expansion and condensation, both of which are employed to a lesser extent.

TABLE 4
THE PERCENTAGE OF GOTTLIEB'S SUBTITLING STRATEGIES USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES OF PLACES

Subtitling strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Transfer	5	55.56
Expansion	2	22.22
Condensation	2	22.22

D. The Result of the Mythological Official Titles

Table 5 presents the distribution of Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies applied to the official titles found in *Havoc in Heaven*. The table shows the frequency and corresponding percentage of each strategy used. Transfer is the most frequently used strategy, with 12 occurrences representing 42.86% of the total. Expansion appears seven times, accounting for 25%, while condensation is used five times, comprising 17.86%. Paraphrase is employed three times (10.71%), and transcription is the least used, occurring once (3.57%). Overall, transfer is the predominant strategy for subtitling official titles, followed by expansion and condensation. Paraphrase and transcription are used less frequently.

TABLE 5
THE PERCENTAGE OF GOTTLIEB'S SUBTITLING STRATEGIES USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL OFFICIAL TITLES

Subtitling strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Transfer	12	42.86
Expansion	7	25
Condensation	5	17.86
Paraphrasing	3	10.71
Transcription	1	3.57

E. The Results of the Mythological Names and Titles in the Beijing Opera Film *Havoc in Heaven*

Table 6 summarises the overall distribution of Gottlieb's subtitling strategies applied to mythological names and titles in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*. The table details the frequency and percentage of each strategy used. Transfer is the most frequently employed strategy, with 20 occurrences, representing 37% of the total. Expansion appears 12 times, accounting for 22%, while condensation is used 9 times, making up 17%. Paraphrase is employed 7 times, constituting 13%, and transcription occurs 6 times, representing 11%. Overall, transfer is the predominant

strategy for subtitling mythological names and titles in the film, followed by expansion and condensation. Paraphrasing and transcription are used less frequently.

TABLE 6
THE PERCENTAGE OF GOTTLIEB'S SUBTITLING STRATEGIES USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES AND TITLES

Subtitling strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Transfer	20	37
Expansion	12	22
condensation	9	17
Paraphrase	7	13
Transcription	6	11

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the percentage of Gottlieb's typology of subtitling strategies applied to mythological names of people, names of objects, names of places, and official titles, the following discussion examines the implications of each strategy's usage and its impact on the accessibility and cultural conveyance of the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven*. In each of the following tables, representative examples from each category are selected for analysis. The categories are presented in order of the proportion of subtitling strategies used, ranked from highest to lowest across the four classifications.

A. Transfer

Gottlieb (1992) describes transfer as the complete conveyance and appropriate translation of meaning. The analysis indicates that transfer is the most frequently used subtitling strategy in *Havoc in Heaven*, comprising 37% of all subtitles for mythological names and titles (see Table 6). Within their respective subsets, it dominates official titles (42.9 %) and place-names (55.6 %), but is less common with objects (22.2 %) and personal names (12.5 %) (Tables 2–5).

Transfer maintains both the content and form of the source text, thereby ensuring a high degree of fidelity in subtitling (Gottlieb, 1992; Diaz-Cintas, 2003). This is particularly important for mythological terms that hold deep cultural significance. For instance, subtitles such as the Jade Emperor (玉帝), the Great Sage Equaling Heaven (齐天大圣), and Gods of Wind, Rain, Thunder, and Lightning (风、雨、雷、电) retain their original structure, thereby facilitating comprehension for the target audience (see Table 7). Similarly, Cave of Water Curtains in the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits (水帘洞) is translated literally, preserving its descriptive accuracy and effectively conveying the mythological grandeur embedded in these references.

TABLE 7
TRANSFER USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES AND TITLES

Category	Chinese Subtitle	English Subtitle	Time
Place	今有 花果山水帘洞	Sun Wukong, the demon monkey of <i>the Cave of Water Curtains in the Mountain</i>	00:08:05,500 --> 00:08:07,999
Object	神针化作 金箍棒 得金盆金甲	The Pillar is transformed into <i>the Golden-hooped Rod</i> . Gold armors and a gold helmet are presented.	00:05:51,708 --> 00:05:57,624
Official Title	我奉 玉帝 圣旨	By the order of <i>the Jade Emperor</i>	00:10:47,833 --> 00:10:50,457
	那妖猴自立 齐天大圣	The demon monkey has proclaimed himself <i>the Great Sage Equaling Heaven</i> .	00:34:25,250 --> 00:34:27,874
	风雨雷电	<i>Gods of Wind, Rain, Thunder and Lightning</i> .	01:13:12,958 --> 01:13:16,749

As Chaume (2004) notes, the transfer strategy, essentially a form-preserving literal translation that grounds the target text firmly in its source culture, enabling audiences to visualise the mythological setting while minimising semantic loss. Transfer therefore complements more adaptive techniques by anchoring the subtitles in cultural authenticity and giving viewers an unambiguous point of reference.

B. Expansion

Expansion is a prominent subtitling strategy in *Havoc in Heaven*, accounting for 22% of the subtitles related to mythological names and titles (see Table 6). It is most frequently used for mythological objects (33.33%, see Table 3) and is also evident in official titles (25%) and place names (22.22%) (see Tables 5 and 4, respectively). However, expansion is notably absent in the subtitling of mythological names of people, indicating that these require less contextual elaboration.

TABLE 8
EXPANSION USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES AND TITLES

Category	Chinese Subtitle	English Subtitle	Time
Objects	盗金丹, 八卦炉内炼就火眼金睛	steals <i>the Pills of Immortality</i> and, after being burned in <i>the Eight-Trigram Furnace</i> , gets a pair of piercing eyes	00:03:01,375 --> 00:03:04,874
	抢走定海神针	and took away <i>the Pillar that Pacifies the Oceans</i> .	00:08:11,875 --> 00:08:14,874
Official title	就封他为弼马温与陛下养马	Why not make him <i>Protector of the Horses</i> and let him raise horses for you?	00:09:30,500 --> 00:09:37,999
	请的是西天如来佛南海观世音	<i>Gautama Buddha of the West Heaven, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva of the South Sea</i>	00:46:20,791 --> 00:46:28,124
Places	龙宫借宝得金箍棒	magical staff Jingu Bang from <i>the Dragon King's palace</i> .	00:02:37,000 --> 00:02:39,540

Expansion clarifies culturally specific terms for international audiences (Díaz-Cintas, 2003; Ivarsson, 1992; Remael, 2003) by incorporating explanatory elements (Gottlieb, 1992). For instance, “金丹” (jīn dān), literally “golden elixir,” is rendered as “Pills of Immortality” to convey its Taoist significance. Similarly, “八卦炉” (bā guà lú) is translated as “Eight-Trigram Furnace,” preserving its religious connotations. Likewise, “定海神针” (dìng hǎi shén zhēn), meaning “Needle of the Sea Stabilizer,” becomes “Pillar that Pacifies the Oceans,” emphasising its mythological role and narrative significance (see Table 8). Such expansions preserve cosmological connotations while remaining intelligible to non-Chinese viewers (Pederson, 2011; Gambier, 2010). Translating 西天如来佛 as “Gautama Buddha of the Western Heaven” and 南海观世音 as “Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva of the Southern Sea,” for example, anchors the deities geographically and theologically, ensuring the film’s mythological integrity (Orero, 2004).

C. Condensation

Condensation, identified by Gottlieb (1992), is used in 17.86% of subtitles for mythological names and titles in *Havoc in Heaven* (see Table 6). This strategy accommodates space and time constraints, promoting readability while preserving essential meaning (Díaz-Cintas, 2003; Remael, 2003). It is particularly relevant for subtitling mythological official titles, names of places, objects, and people (see Tables 2-5).

TABLE 9
CONDENSATION USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES AND TITLES

Category	Chinese Subtitle	English Subtitle	Time
Official title	带领红鸾天禧月孛子九曜星君	Lead <i>the red phoenix, Tianxi, Yuebo, the Lords of Nine Luminaries</i> .	01:13:04,916 → 01:13:12,957
	带领青龙白虎罗喉计都南北星斗	Lead <i>the Azure Dragon, the White Tiger, Rahu and Ketu and star lords of the South and North</i> .	01:12:03,000 → 01:12:11,874
	带领金吒木吒天罡地煞六丁六甲	<i>Jinza, Muzha, the Heavenly Dippers and Earthly Fiends, and Six Dings and Six Jias</i> .	01:14:13,708 → 01:14:23,582
Object	且饱餐赤麟龙肝凤脑	to be able to <i>feast on all these rarest foods</i> .	00:49:45,458 → 00:49:49,957
People	还有那骍骝紫燕绿耳飞黄赤兔嘶骏	Besides, sire, there are <i>tens of thousands of celestial horses</i> .	00:13:52,625 → 00:13:56,499

Condensation simplifies complex terms while maintaining narrative coherence. For example, “红鸾天禧月孛子九曜星君” (*hóng luán tiān xǐ yuè bèi xiān zǐ jiǔ yào xīng jūn*) is condensed to “the red phoenix, Tianxi, Yuebo, the Lords of Nine Luminaries,” retaining key elements. Similarly, celestial horse names such as 骍骝 (*huá liú*), 紫燕 (*zǐ yàn*), and 绿耳 (*lǜ ěr*), are summarised as “tens of thousands of celestial horses” to preserve their mythological grandeur (Gambier, 2003; Orero, 2004). Another example is “all these rarest foods” for “赤麟蹄龙肝凤脑” (*chì lín tí lóng gān fèng nǎo*). Such condensations align with viewers’ reading speeds (Ivarsson, 1992) and safeguard cultural resonance while ensuring subtitle economy (Chaume, 2004; Orero, 2004).

D. Paraphrase

Paraphrase, as defined by Gottlieb (1992), is used in 13% of subtitles for mythological names and titles in *Havoc in Heaven* (see Table 6). This strategy rephrases content to fit subtitle constraints while preserving meaning, particularly when direct translation lacks clarity (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021; Ivarsson, 1992). It is applied in mythological names of objects (33.33%, see Table 3), official titles (10.71%, see Table 5), and people (12.5%, see Table 2), but not to the names of places.

Paraphrase enhances clarity by using culturally familiar terms. For example, “三昧真火” (*sān wèi zhēn huǒ*), literally “Three-Flavored True Fire,” becomes “the Supreme Flames,” making it more accessible. “火眼金睛” (*huǒ yǎn jīn jīng*), meaning “fiery eyes with golden pupils,” is rendered as “a pair of piercing eyes,” emphasising sharp vision. “瘟神” (*wēn shén*), directly translated as “plague god,” is paraphrased as “evil gods” to convey malevolence (see Table 10).

Such choices improve readability and semantic accuracy (Chaume, 2004; Orero, 2004) and meet the brevity rule of modern subtitling. Ultimately, paraphrase bridges cultural gaps and maintains narrative integrity (Gambier, 2003; Ranzato & Zanotti, 2018).

TABLE 10
PARAPHRASE USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES AND TITLES

Category	Chinese Subtitle	English Subtitle	Time
Object	盗金丹，八卦炉内炼就 火眼金睛	steals the Pills of Immortality and, after being burned in the Eight-Trigram Furnace, gets <i>a pair of piercing eyes</i> .	00:03:01,375 → 00:03:04,874
	待我用起 三昧真火 定将猴头化为灰爆	I shall incinerate the monkey with <i>the Supreme Flames</i> .	01:05:28,833 → 01:05:35,624
Official title	败 瘟神	We defeat <i>evil gods</i> .	00:38:26,958 → 00:38:30,249
People	所以 太白星君 让我等是多磕头少讲话	So <i>the Great White Golden Star</i> asked us to yes him always and keep our mouth shut.	00:17:03,541 → 00:17:12,374

E. Transcription

Transcription is the least used subtitling strategy in *Havoc in Heaven*, accounting for 11% of subtitles for mythological names and titles (see Table 6). Within the subset of person-names, however, it accounts for 62.5 % of cases (Table 2), faithfully conveying figures such as 孙悟空 Sun Wukong and 哪吒 Nezha (Table 11). According to Gottlieb (1992), transcription retains the original sound, enabling audiences to experience the authentic auditory elements of the source text. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) further emphasise its role in preserving cultural authenticity and recognisability.

TABLE 11
TRANSCRIPTION USED FOR MYTHOLOGICAL NAMES AND TITLES

Category	Chinese Subtitle	English Subtitle	Time
People	孙悟空	<i>Sun Wu Kong</i>	00:08:21,500 → 00:08:26,249
	敖广 为何如此狼狈	<i>Ao Guang</i> . Why do you look so miserable?	00:08:00,041 → 00:08:03,790
	我不是奸细我是天上的 李长庚	I am no spy, but <i>Li Changgeng</i> from Heaven.	00:10:01,958 → 00:10:06,749
Official title	命 二郎神 带领 六丁六甲 埋伏凌霄左右	Ask <i>Erlang Shen</i> and the <i>Six Dings and Six Ji</i> as to set up an ambush by the Hall above Clouds	00:35:32,208 → 00:35:38,624

Beyond phonetics, transcription ensures cultural specificity. Names such as "Sun Wukong" and "Erlang Shen" are deeply embedded in Chinese mythology, and their retention maintains historical and literary significance (Díaz-Cintas, 2003). This approach prevents misinterpretation; for instance, translating "Sun Wukong" as "Monkey King" would alter the character's cultural connotations. As Remael (2004) and Gambier (2003) note, keeping the source form aids global recognisability without distorting meaning.

Overall, the strategic use of transcription in *Havoc in Heaven* complements other subtitling methods such as condensation, paraphrase, and expansion, transcription helps balance accessibility with cultural fidelity for international audiences (Chaume, 2004; Pedersen, 2011).

VI. CONCLUSION

The analysis of subtitling strategies used for mythological names and titles in the Beijing opera film *Havoc in Heaven* offers a comprehensive understanding of how Gottlieb's (1992) subtitling strategies can be effectively applied to culturally laden content. By systematically categorising mythological nomenclature into four groups—names of people, names of objects, names of places, and official titles—this study reveals distinct patterns in the use of these subtitling strategies.

The predominant use of transfer (37%) underscores a clear preference for direct translations that preserve both the original meaning and form, thus maintaining the cultural and narrative integrity of the source text. This approach ensures that the audience receives an authentic representation of the mythological elements. Additionally, the considerable use of the strategies: expansion (22%) and paraphrase (13%) reflects a concerted effort to provide additional context and clarity, thereby facilitating cross-cultural understanding. These strategies enrich comprehension by elaborating on culturally specific terms and rephrasing complex concepts.

The use of condensation (17%) further highlights the necessity of adapting lengthy or intricate terms into concise and readable subtitles that conform to the spatial and temporal constraints of subtitling, while still preserving essential meaning. Additionally, the application of transcription (11%) preserves the phonetic authenticity of the original names, allowing viewers to experience the distinctive sounds and stylistic nuances of the Chinese language.

In a word, the balanced application of these subtitling strategies enables *Havoc in Heaven* to be appreciated by a wider international audience. These strategies contribute to a deeper understanding of Chinese mythology and culture while simultaneously retaining the original spirit of the narrative. This study not only advances our understanding of effective subtitling strategies for mythologically rich content but also offers practical implications for audiovisual translation in similar contexts. Nonetheless, the focus on a single opera film may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research could further explore the impact of these strategies on audience reception, as well as their applicability in the subtitling of other culturally significant films and operas.

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