

A comparative analysis of subtitling strategies – Culture Specific
Items in the series *Friends*

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A comparative analysis of subtitling strategies – Culture Specific
Items in the series *Friends*

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), no material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have given me support throughout my life, especially over the course of pursuing my academic objectives. Raised in a traditional family, I have been well aware of the virtues and norms followed by traditional Chinese people. Preparation of this dissertation has given me the opportunity to summarise many core values of the Chinese culture.

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Abstract

The dissertation is based on the analysis of thirty episodes of the American television series *Friends* with the focus on the CSIs (Culture Specific Items) and how these differences have been handled by Chinese translators who produced the subtitles for the English-Chinese translation. The analysis was based on the assumption that Mainland China's culture is different from the US culture so people in these two countries may have problems in understanding CSIs if they are translated literally and if the subtitle translation is not adapted to the target audience. Such adaptation is normally known as localisation. The cultural differences that are ingrained in CSIs might have to be handled with caution in the production of subtitles. The main objective of the dissertation has been to analyse different translation choices which are currently used by the translators in questions, dealing with CSIs where cultural differences between mainland China and the US arise. The research discovered that repetition of CSIs is a strategy which underperformed, failing to help the Chinese audience to comprehend the cultural connotations associated with the CSIs. The paper has provided some recommendations as to how the subtitle translation of such CSIs might be handled in such a way that the audience will have a better understanding of the same.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Television soap operas have become increasingly widespread in the world in recent years, which could be said to be a sign that American culture is becoming something of an ‘export’ commodity. The export of soap operas to other countries often involves translation, especially in Asia, where English is not an official language. In the translation of soap operas, translators have to decide whether to use dubbing or subtitling as an approach. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. Dubbing, in which the original dialogue is translated and recorded by actors speaking the Target Language, is a common practice in European countries such as France and Italy (O’Leary, 2005). Audiences in other countries, including Mainland China and Taiwan, prefer subtitling, where they can capture the character’s original voice and get a sense of authenticity.

In China, subtitling has become increasingly popular, especially on the Internet. This is primarily because many young Chinese viewers perceive soap operas not only as a form of entertainment but also as a tool for learning English. While language barriers are still a problem to many viewers, comprehension difficulty could be said to be solved by the use of subtitles. However, it remains to be seen whether subtitles are successful in solving all areas of potential cross-cultural misunderstanding, such as the misunderstanding that may be associated with scenes involving humour, aspects of politeness or Culture Specific Items.

1.1 The aim of the dissertation

The aim of the dissertation was to analyse the strategies that are used by translators in translating the subtitles of a US television sitcom series into Chinese. *Friends* was selected as the TV series for analysis. The study involved a selection of thirty scenes involving Culture Specific Items (CSIs). Subtitles were analysed in terms of brevity, reliability, synchronisation and efficacy in order to identify the most common strategies used by translators during subtitle production. Where subtitles were considered unsatisfactory, for instance because they were deemed to leave audiences confused or misinformed, alternative strategies were recommended. The main rationale behind this

two-step analysis was that it was expected to give some indication as to what translation strategies might be effective in handling CSIs when producing Chinese subtitles for American television series such as the one studied.

1.2 Where study fits in existing literature

This study included an overview of the literature in cross-cultural communication, politeness, translation, especially translation of Culture Specific items. In terms of translation strategies, scholars have different perspectives on the extent to which translators should aim for preservation of the source context and strict adherence to its grammatical structure. While some scholars consider it important to preserve the source text, others prefer a flexible approach and adapt or even abandon part of the source text in an effort to help the audience to comprehend the text overall. In dealing with CSIs (Culture Specific Items), different strategies have been recommended (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). For example, some scholars recommend omission, to be used in subtitles wherever CSIs cannot be comprehended easily and practical equivalents in the target text cannot be found easily (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). The current study will involve an analysis of subtitles in an attempt to identify what strategies may have been adopted by translators in practice.

1.3 Significance of current studies

The current research study may be said to be important for two reasons. First, it is, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the first one to link Hofstede's (1973) cultural dimensions with an analysis of subtitle translations. Obviously, it is important to note that *Friends* is a sitcom, and therefore cannot be said to be a true representation of American life. A sitcom is produced to amuse the audience, so the audience might be well aware that lines in *Friends* are designed to make them laugh and are not to be taken serious.

Secondly, the significance of this study may be said to lie in the fact that up until now, scholars (Nida, 1969; Aixelá, 1996) have expressed contrasting opinions on the strengths of different strategies that can be used in translation and in dealing with Culture Specific Items (CSIs). However limited effort has been made to analyse the

strategies that are favoured by translators in dealing with CSIs in practice or to see whether any strategies might be preferable to their alternatives in terms of achieving an effective translation. Findings of the research may provide an insight into the practical value of the various translation strategies proposed by different scholars.

1.4 Design and methodology

The current research study consists of two parts: first, the selection of scenes that require the translator to deal with differences between Chinese culture and US culture, in terms of politeness, as expressed by Hofstede's four benchmarks of power distance, masculinity, collectivism/individualism and uncertainty avoidance, even though *Friends* is not a true representation of US everyday culture, as outlined above. Secondly, it offers a selection of scenes that show how subtitle producers handled CSIs. By summarising the strategies that were used by subtitle producers but were deemed not satisfactory against four standards (brevity, reliability, effectiveness and synchronisation) and proposing alternative strategies, the research will suggest what strategies might be more suitable when dealing with CSIs in English to Chinese subtitle translation.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The introduction is followed by a review of the literature and past research. This includes an overview of the existing studies with the emphasis on key concepts in the analysis of the Chinese culture and the US culture (such as face, politeness and intergroup relationship) and strategies used in dealing with CSIs.

Chapter One contains an outline of the structure of the whole dissertation, including a brief discussion of the significance of the study. It also gives an outline of design and methodology. Chapter two presents a review of the literature, which consists of two parts, focusing firstly in cultural differences between the culture of mainland China and the US culture. Hofstede's four dimensions, collectivism/individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and power distance are discussed as they are referred to in the analysis of cultural differences. Politeness is also discussed with the emphasis placed on the differences in the concept of politeness or courtesy in the two different cultures. The second part is concerned with the analysis of strategies used in subtitle production and

CSI translation. Strategies recommended by well-known theorists such as Nida, Newmark, Aixelá and Davies will be discussed and their perspectives compared. Chapter Three presents a detailed description of the methodology adopted by this study. In this chapter, the purpose of the study is restated, that is, to study the strategies used by translators in dealing with CSIs and other cultural differences. The use of HPTEs (High probability Translation Equivalent), based on Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1969), is recommended. This approach requires the researcher to find HPTEs for the subtitling of original discourse and to measure outcomes against the four criteria of brevity, reliability, synchronisation and efficacy. Chapter Four presents the pilot analysis. This pilot analysis helped the researcher to decide on the final research instruments for subtitle translation analysis undertaken. Chapter Five presented analyses and findings of scenes involving politeness, followed by scenes involving different Culture Specific Items and their respective subtitle translations. Chapter Six, which contains the main analysis and discussion, is a review of findings of the study with a discussion of these findings' implications (such as the strategies that can be used in handling CSIs effectively). Chapter Seven presents a summary of all the previous chapters as well as a discussion of the issues that arise from the study and might attract scholars' attention in this area.

1.6 Summary

Analysing the application of strategies in dealing with CSIs in the English to Chinese subtitle translation of American television soap operas has gained significance in recent years as US-made soap operas are now being watched around the world. The importance of the study is further highlighted by the fact that the subtitle translators needed to deal with some obvious differences between Mainland Chinese culture and the US culture. By offering an analysis of the performance of strategies used in handling CSIs in *Friends*, this study may contribute to the existing literature on cross-cultural communication, audiovisual translation and translation of CSIs and that will, in turn, provide implications for further study.

Chapter Two: Review of the literature and past research

2.1 Introduction

The thesis is mainly concerned with the translation strategies used in dealing with Culture Specific Items (CSIs). Secondly, it looks at how subtitle translators dealt with any scenes involving cultural differences concerning politeness in English to Chinese translation for a Mainland Chinese audience. For both types of analyses data was taken from an American television series called *Friends*. This literature review will therefore cover four major areas of studies: first, cross-cultural studies with specific focus on cultural differences between the US and Mainland China, second, politeness and politeness theory, third, subtitling and last but not least, issues involved in the translation of Culture Specific Items. The literature review has been ordered in this manner primarily because it would help the audience of the report to understand some general and fundamental concepts, such as cultural differences before having some insight into how these concepts affect translation and subtitle writing, especially the translation of CSIs, a specific subdivision of translation theory.

Understanding the cultural differences between the US and Mainland China could be said to be the very first step toward answering the question as to why politeness is perceived differently by Chinese and Americans. This in turns will help us appreciate any possible problems translators may have when translating subtitles from English into Chinese for an American sitcom which contains many irreverent scenes. Politeness is said to have the capacity to showcase the values, norms and notions possessed by a specific cultural group (Stevens, 2007). In other words, underlying the behaviour patterns or language that exhibit politeness are some core components of a culture. For example, in China, one might respond to compliment by self-deprecating. This kind of response mirrors how the concept of “humility” could be valued in China. Confucianism, a philosophy that has dominated in China more than two thousand years, advocates the concept of “humility” (Stevens, 2007). In the US, humility might be linked with hypocrisy or falsehood. It is worth nothing that some scholars argue (Langley, 2008) (Morton & Lewis, 2005) that some traditional Chinese values have possibly been lost among the younger generation, as a result of the ten-year-long Cultural Revolution,

during which Confucianist ideas were marginalised and disapproved.

In the past, the communist party at the top of the power pyramid in China had its full control over the economic, political and social machinery of the whole country and even interfered in citizens' personal life (such as marriage, dwelling places and access to necessities and benefits) (Xu & Engelmann, 1999). These norms and conventions have been changed fundamentally to mirror the impacts of various forces, such as economic reform and internationalisation (Gibb, 2006). The respect for the traditional power hierarchy endures but definitely loses its strength to some extent, for example, because of the increase in self-employment and entrepreneurship in the country (Gibb, 2006).

Subtitling is said to be at the frontier of cross-cultural communication, where two cultures might clash because of cultural differences. Although many behavioural patterns and statements in a TV programme or movie can easily be interpreted and understood by viewers, there are occasions on which cultural differences are so remarkable that one's behaviour or utterance in the programme or movie can be incomprehensible, shocking, bizarre or even disturbing in another culture. It is particularly true when sitcoms (situation comedies) such as *Friends* are created intentionally to make the audience laugh. Humour is often said to be one of the most difficult things to translate, for cross-cultural reasons. Characters' statements or behaviours might be excessively impolite. For this reason the literature review will have a particular focus on the concept of "politeness" and CSIs.

2.2 Cultural differences between the US and Mainland China

Since this study concerns an American sitcom television series which has been subtitled for a Mainland Chinese audience, it seems appropriate to have a closer look at possible cultural difference between mainstream US culture and mainstream Mainland Chinese culture. Culture refers to a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group (Martin & Nakayama, 2000). A culture can be identified by four benchmarks, including power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance (Martin & Nakayama, 2000). Hofstede (1973) classifies societies into two: traditional or modern Mainland China is likely to be at the "traditional" end, while the US is at the "modern" end. The former tends to observe

social traditions, norms and regulations. The concept of family or group is strong there. During the Cultural Revolution period (1966 to 1976), factory unit or work unit gained strength and took over family in determining one's decisions in life. Factories decided people's housing, medical care, food allocation, pension and even marriage (Lu, 2004). This has had some continued impact on the culture of Mainland China despite the recent trends such as privatisation and the mushrooming self-employed people (Lu, 2004). In contrast, the US is defined as a modern society, where individuality is highlighted. These theories might have provide a true description of truth about the modernity, but I might accept the theories with caution, as the US has its traditions and norms as well. For example, I doubt whether the people in the US have fully abandoned the concept of family and refused to recognise the merits of collective work and cohesive groups. It appears that over-generalisation of a culture might lead to a narrow and biased view toward this culture without considering specific cases.

Power distance is the degree to which members of organisations and institutions accept and expect power's unequal distribution. Again, this is important in order to appreciate any possible problems translators may have when translating subtitles from English into Chinese for *Friends*, which contains many scenes where a Chinese audience might expect rigid rules surrounding power distance. In China, a high level of power and wealth inequality is accepted (Jaw, Ling, Wang & Chang, 2007). In the US, by comparison, a greater equality between societal levels is valued. Employees do not think that they should be inferior to their employers or superiors. In the US workplace, there are occasions on which employees argue with and make jokes about their supervisors. In China, a subordinate would not contemplate the possibility of arguing with his/her supervisor or challenging his/her supervisor's view outright. In most cases, subordinates compliment their supervisors and follow their supervisors' command without questioning (Jaw et al, 2007). These differences would suggest that Chinese people are conscious of their rank in the organisation. The awareness of the hierarchical structure of an organisation or communication in the US is not as strong as it is in China (Reuvid & Yong, 2005). My personal opinion to this issue is that some other variables such as the size of the business and the industry in which an organisation operates might have their impact as well. A small or medium enterprise is less likely to adopt a

bureaucratic organisational structure as it adds unnecessary communication barriers, whether the organisation is in China or in the US. The research may be able to examine whether Americans are less tolerant of hierarchy and power distance as Chinese people are, although it is important to note that *Friends* is a sitcom and not everything in *Friends* reflects real life.

Individualism refers to the degree to which individuals perceive their ties with other members of society (Hofstede, 1973). Again, this aspect is of significance in the light of the current study, where data was collected from an American sitcom. In an individualistic society, ties between individuals are normally loose, while in a collectivistic society, people enjoy integration into cohesive social groups, such as extended families and work units (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). China is characterised by a collectivistic culture, attributed not only to the collectivist society enforced by the Communist party but also to the country's cultural heritage (Martin & Nakayama, 2000). The USA, according to Hofstede's research (1973), the USA have the highest index in individualism, of all countries surveyed, indicating that the bonds between members, either members of family or community members in the US are loose (Martin & Nakayama, 2000). I agree that family members tend to be more interdependent in China than in the US. It is not unusual that parents in China support their children's college education, career, first home and even their grandchildren's with their savings. However, it is doubtful whether this strong bond exists among community members. In the US, community programmes organised by churches to help needy people are commonplace but rare in China. Although the research question is mainly concerned with analysing strategies used in translating CSIs, the study might also use *Friends* to examine whether American people are more individualistic than Chinese people. Once again, it is important to bear in mind that *Friends* is a comedy, so may not wholly reflect real life situations.

Masculinity refers to the distribution of roles between genders. The US has a higher-than-world-average index in masculinity, indicating that males tend to dominate a bigger portion of power structure than women do (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Of the six main characters in *Friends*, Ross is a university professor, Chandler is a senior manager, Monica is a chef and Phoebe is a masseuse. Rachel is a manager, but her

power in the fashion company is limited. China scores lower in masculinity, but in China, women's underrepresentation in the power structure is evident. Women are expected to be submissive, obedient, inhibited and taciturn (Stevens, 2007). The role of women in society is limited to household responsibilities, although women also work outside their home and earn income for their family. However, in modern China, women's social status has been improved greatly. This change has found its roots in two historical incidents. The first is the Cultural Revolution, which occurred between 1966 and 1976. In this ten-year-long movement, the Four Olds (namely old ideas, old habits, old customs and old cultures) were condemned and deserted. The old idea of women's role in society has since then been scraped and revolutionised. This is evidenced by the disappearance of customs such as arranged marriages and foot binding. The legacy of the Cultural revolution is compounded by the economic reform which was implemented in 1977. Women's participation in the labour market as income earners has also given them financial independence and earned them a higher role in households. Women have shared ownership of properties with their husbands in marriage and can also file for a divorce. They are not taken as men's belongings as they used to be (Hershatter 2007).

The economic reform, as well as the one child policy, which has been implemented for more than 3 decades, has also changed the country's household size and family hierarchy dramatically. Senior adults, especially men, who held unchallengeable positions in a family's hierarchy because of the possession of the family's property, have been undermined due to the fact that young adults can manage to earn income independently rather than relying on the family's assets or the inheritance from parents (Esherrick, Pickowicz & Walder, 2006). In the past, children were primarily submissive to parents, but now, the roles have been exchanged, for the simple reason that a married couple normally have one child and has to count on this child in late life (Morton & Lewis, 2005).

While it is not unusual that women talk about sex in public with their male friends in the US, this would be inconceivable in China. Chinese women might be surprised when they see people in *Friends* discuss sex frequently at a cafe, a shop or the staff room in

the company. As *Friends* is a Sitcom and how women behave in this TV soap programme might not be the true representation of how they behave in real life in the US. However, considering the frequency of such scenes in *Friends* and the relevance of this subject to the main focus of the study, some scenes will therefore be examined in the research as well.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which uncertainty and ambiguity are tolerated. In a society that is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty avoidance, people prefer rules and a structured environment (House, 2004). The US has a low level of uncertainty avoidance, compared to China (House, 2004). This may help to explain why this country does not have many rules (rules that stipulate how people should speak or act in different occasions), nor do people think that they require the guidance from rules to control outcomes. For example, in China, in group meetings, group members express their opinions in the order of age, specialisation and ranks. In the US, group members are less constrained by such rules. Another typical example is that in China, people are strongly aware of the opinions of their family, friends and colleagues when making a decision. Howard (2008) argues that although single mothers are increasing in number and premarital sex is commonplace, women are still expected to do everything as they are expected to do by all those around them, such as getting married and bearing children. By comparison, in the US, people are less restricted by other people when they make personal decisions. Ross's three marriages, Joey's openness to transient relationships and Monica's impulsive ideas could all be said to be typical examples. This presumption about how American people and Chinese people tolerate uncertainty. This is related to the main focus of the study and will therefore be examined in the research as well.

Another distinct difference between Chinese culture and American culture could be reflected in the notion that Chinese culture falls into the high-context culture, in which communication is basically implicit, indirect and context-based (Jandt, 2004). By comparison, US culture appreciates openness and directness and pays little attention to context (Zhu, McKenna & Sun, 2007). This difference can affect how these two cultures perceive politeness in communication. While non-disclosure or delayed disclosure of information can be taken as a disrespectful behavioural pattern from an

American point of view, direct utterances without any conservation might be regarded as signs of imprudence in Chinese culture (Zhu et al, 2007). The next segment will look at definitions of politeness as they relate to different cultural environments, with particular emphasis once more on the US and the Mainland Chinese cultural settings as they relate to the background to this study.

2.3 Definition of politeness

This thesis includes an analysis of subtitle translation for scenes involving various aspects of politeness, hence it is important to include a definition of what the researcher means by politeness. Politeness can be defined as the management of words and actions to enable one to gain other people's positive recognition of his/her words and actions (Watts, Ide & Ehich, 2005). It can also be defined as a form of social behaviour which aims to enhance one's self-esteem and improve socialisation outcomes in various social settings (Watts, et al, 2005). Jandt (2004) holds that the politeness reflected in verbal planning and execution is indicative of one's pragmatically relevant declarative knowledge, knowledge that reveals the speaker's internal structure. In general, one's internal structure has components such as knowledge, wants, attitudes and feelings (Lee, 2000). These may all be said to be affected by the cultural environment to which one is exposed. For example, in China, one tradition in the system of addressing others is to put one's title or rank in front of his/her surname. "President Lee", "Manager Chen", "Chief Huang" and so forth are commonplace. This may suggest that Chinese people are strongly aware of the weight of social roles in their sense of self-identity and that Chinese society is hierarchical (Lee, 2000). This is true according to my personal experience. "Teacher Lee", "Professor Lee", "Lawyer Lee", "Engineer Lee", "Uncle Lee" and so forth all suggest that Chinese people have a clear concept of their occupations and age in their self-identity. People tend to show respect to those who have noble occupations such as those who practice law and do engineering work and are senior in their roles. The understanding of the cultural norm of Chinese people might be a factor to be considered in translating the subtitles, which is a main concern of this study.

Politeness is taken as a deviation from rational efficiency, because politeness

normally requires the intense use of implicature and encourages inferences, which might lend some obstacles to straightforward interactions (Lee, 2000). Another view toward politeness is that it is a product of rational efficiency in cases where face wants are satisfied (Lee, 2000). Grice's Cooperative (1985, cited in Lee, 2000) Principle applies here: the speaker observes politeness as a virtue cherished in interactions, while the listener assumes that the speaker observes this principle. My experience would be in favour of the idea that communication is flexible and can differ in varying contexts. Politeness is observed in many cases but not invariably followed. For example, in Chinese, “您” and “你” both mean “you”, but the former is used to indicate politeness, for example, when a young person addresses a senior person, while the latter does not have such implications. The coexistence of both of these characters reveals that understanding a culture would not go without considering the contextual factors.

“Face” plays an important role in the social code of Chinese society. “Face” can be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is a socio-psychological construct that distinguishes the adult from the child. By preserving the face, one reaches the feeling that he/she is seen in a positive light by others. The second is an act of deliberation on social occasions to display the social stand that one takes (Lee, 2000). One is willing to show respect to the other in communication and recognise his/her rank, attributes, accomplishments and reputations, in exchange for reciprocity and acknowledgement at the same level. Communication is in fact a process of giving and maintaining face (Zhu, et al, 2007). The role of “face” in the American culture could be said to be much less important. In the US workplace, a supervisor might give direction instruction to his/her employees or even point out the employees' mistakes directly. In China, by comparison, the supervisor might talk to employees in person in order to save employees' face (Emery, C. R & Oertel, 2006). This is also applicable in friendship. In the US, giving advice to friends is commonplace but in China, this can be considered as offensive, sending the message that one is not as capable as other people to handle problems. In China, one would have received much more compliments from his/her friends, although such compliment may not necessarily be candid (Pan & Zhang, 2004). The research can analyse the TV series and identify those scenes in which some dialogues might surprise the Chinese audience. Chinese viewers might consider such dialogues likely to hurt

people's feelings. This is probable, according to my personal experience, that cultural differences might make something acceptable in one culture unacceptable or even offensive in another. This might help understand why some CSIs are used in a specific context, for example, to indicate the speaker's emotion (e.g., jealous, anxiety or contempt), which is also related to the study.

Chinese may be said to be situation-centred while Americans may be said to be more individual-centred (Jandt, 2004). In other words, Chinese pay more attention what they are expected to do in given contexts rather than what they want to do (Pan, 2000). This lends support to the collectivistic nature of Chinese society. Another implication is that in the analysis of politeness of Chinese people, situational factors should be considered. In other words, factors such as age, gender, social roles and social settings, should be considered as well (Pan, 2000). The behaviour patterns shown in a family setting might be different from those in a workplace.

Pan (2000) carried out a survey among Chinese respondents and collected their views toward different requestive strategies. 59% of respondents consider "please help me to open the window" as polite, 17.8% take it as neutral and 23.2% associate this with bold, rude strategies. Over half of the respondents considered "we'll open this window" rude, 31.5% as neutral and 21.9% as polite. "Can I open the window for a while" is preferred as the best alternative. 79.2% of respondents accepted it as "polite". It is therefore clear that in daily communication, Chinese tend to perceive indirect requests as polite, instead of direct request. Lii (1986 cited in Pan, 1994) argues that different from western countries, politeness is very often taken as an important approach to avoid conflicts, China links politeness as the creation of harmony and mutual trust, which is particularly evident in business settings and social settings. According to Lii (1986 cited in Pan, 1994), Chinese value modesty and empathy. Americans by comparison, are sometimes said to have a much stronger sense of self-expression. They might enjoy disclosing their knowledge and expertise and expressing their personal opinions. In contrast, Chinese prefer to keep humble and give opinions only when receiving such a request. For example, a Chinese businessman might state that he does not operate his business well and does not have expertise in business although he might be driving a Porsche. This is not the true representation of his business. Instead, it is an

indicator of his humbleness (Stevens, 2007). In the researcher's view, if the Chinese audience sees Americans bragging about themselves/blowing their own trumpets in *Friends*, especially in front of their superiors or older friends, Chinese viewers may well consider this verbal behaviour as unnecessary or unjustified. They will most likely be unaware that *Friends* is a comedy and as such designed to make the audience laugh by having characters behave in perhaps unacceptable or excessively impolite ways.

The disparity between individualism and collectivism may also account for how Chinese and Americans may be said to treat in-groups and out-groups differently. For example, in a collectivistic society, people tend to treat the members in the same group politely in an effort to obtain interpersonal harmony and group solidarity (Chen, 2006). The irony is that while Chinese people may be said to not be as strongly aware of politeness in front of strangers (those who are unlikely to become members of the in-group) as they are in front of in-group members or those who they think are likely to become members, they can be involved in informal conflict talks with close friends or family members, taking such talks as a means of consolidating in-group relations (Chen, 2006). Therefore, it is more reasonable to think that Chinese people might be indifferent to strangers than to suggest that they are comfortable with being impolite to strangers (Chen, 2006). By comparison, Chinese audiences watching a series like *Friends* may assume that Americans are found more frequently and boldly involved in disagreements with either intimates or strangers than their Chinese counterparts (Chen, 2006). When Americans express their discontent, they might use sarcastic language, idioms, pun and so forth. In the researcher's view, Chinese viewers might not understand these as they are not familiar with US culture. Chinese viewers are apt to conceal their feelings if they are not happy with another member in their inter-group. Although it is important to realise that *Friends* is a sitcom and characters in *Friends* may be deliberately rude in order to amuse the audience (which might not occur in real life), the dissertation will use the scenes in *Friends* and look into cultural-specific-items that maybe involved in these situations and how these have been handled by the subtitle translators.

Another example to illustrate how American people perceive politeness in a different manner from their Chinese counterparts is customer service. In large part due to the legacy of the state-owned service sector, Chinese shop attendants do not treat

their customers as politely as American counterparts do (Ram, 1995). In the era where the economy was planned and resources were controlled by the state, citizens had to accept all goods and services allocated to them. Therefore, shop attendants were arrogant at that time, with the power to decide who would receive goods first. “Can you stop complaining for a while?” is for example, quite commonly heard in a shop in China, but in the US, as Rachel passed on her customer service experience to Joey, “the client is always right”. The difference is also partially attributed to the collectivistic culture of China, where individuals’ special needs can be taken as unusual, demanding and unreasonable. The prevalent notion is that as a product or service is accepted by other people, this complaint from one customer is not well-justified. Chinese viewers might be interested in the language used by service providers, shop attendants or bar attendants when they are not happy with critical customers. In the researcher’s view and based on her own experience from growing up in Mainland China, Chinese viewers’ vocabulary in this field might be limited. The study will focus on how to convey the meaning of CSIs of this type to Chinese viewers.

Despite all these cross-cultural differences, Pan (2000) argues that a combination of different strategies is more commonplace in the real world and the need for politeness varies in different situations (e.g., family setting, the work environment). In other words, Chinese people do not follow a limited number of strategies rigidly in communication. Pan (1994) suggests that the proposition in itself (whether it is inherently polite or not) does not determine the politeness strategies Chinese speakers use in communication. Alternatively, a Chinese speaker tends to modify his/her strategy according to the person to whom he/she speaks and according to the situation.

The fact that Americans and Chinese may be said to perceive politeness differently helps to explain why the response of some Americans in some occasions where politeness is needed appears to be eccentric, incomprehensible or even impolite from a Chinese’s perspective. This is of course particularly true in the current study, where data was selected from an American sitcom series, which contained many scenes where characters were purposely breaching the rules of politeness in order to get a laugh out of the target (American) audience. Some might argue that the translator has the responsibility to help the audience understand this response. In the researcher’s view,

Chinese viewers' interest in the TV series will be seriously diminished if the Chinese audience were to feel ongoing confusion and misunderstanding.

The next section will therefore focus on some important translation theories which were proposed in the second half of the twentieth century and which may be said to have had an ongoing impact on translation approaches. This will be followed by a brief outline of some of the more recent approaches to the translation of Culture Specific Items and some of the taxonomies proposed in relation to the same.

2.4 Translation strategies

Different translation theorists have proposed different approaches and emphasised different principles in translation. One influential theorist from the second half of the twentieth century was Nida (1969), who proposed his theories based on his experience in the field of bible translation. During the course of translating the Bible for people from very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Nida stressed that the translation of the original text should make efforts to achieve the same response in readers from the target culture as that which the source text brought about in readers from the source culture. A good example to illustrate this is that Nida proposed using a young seal, which is white and innocent of sin in Inuit people's culture, as an alternative to sheep, when translating Lamb of God, because Inuit people are not familiar with lambs and its cultural implication. Nida argued that to people living in Palestine the words Lamb of God had the connotation of a totally innocent (white) young animal was sacrificed to make up for the sins of people in general. Considering the fact that different languages have different semantic fields to reflect their everyday reality, finding an equivalent that achieves semantic consistency may need to take into account the connotations of particular words. Nida defined the type of effect achieved by this kind of translation as 'dynamic equivalence' (1969, p. 13 ff).

According to Hu (1992), a Chinese translation scholar (1992), Nida's dynamic equivalence is not likely to be attained. This is supported by three concerns. Hu (1992) comments that the meaning of the SL text is unlikely to be transferred to the TL text without distortion. It is possible to find a TL content-form entity which can substitute for its corresponding SL entity, but an entire transference without altering the original

connection between the content and the form is unlikely to happen. Hu also argues that even though dynamic equivalence can be achieved in some cases, it does not necessarily mean that it can elicit equivalent response. The differences between the audience of the SL text and the audience of the TL text are so evident that they cannot be eliminated by the so-called dynamic equivalence. What the audience can elicit from a dialogue differs because of cultural differences. According to Hu (1992), despite the efforts made by the translator to reproduce the original meaning of the SL text for the target audience, how the target audience perceives or interprets the text is not under the translator's control.

Hu's comments are relevant to the current study in that they criticize Nida's ideas in relation to the English-Chinese language pair. However, this study will follow Nida in that the researcher agrees that 'dynamic equivalence' constitutes an effective translation in terms of overcoming cross-cultural differences and achieving an effect in the Target Language reader that is similar to that in the receivers of the original text.

Nida also contends that, in Bible translation, contextual consistency should take precedence over verbal consistency, in other words, the translator should choose words which make sense to the target reader in the given context. It will be interesting to see whether the subtitle translators in the current study could be said to have followed a similar approach to the one advocated by Nida.

In addition, Nida examined the different features of various texts, classifying texts according to their linguistic function, ranging from informative, to persuasive and expressive. According to Nida, different texts warrant a different translation approach dependent on the function of the text. In his view, a text that is meant to persuade the audience (such as an advertisement or a piece of propaganda) should be translated in such a way that dynamic equivalence is achieved, rather than formal correspondence. As indicated briefly above, Nida's theories continue to have relevance today, as an assessment of translation often involves determining whether the translator has followed an approach of maintaining 'formal correspondence' with the original, or of trying to create 'dynamic equivalence' (Nida, 1969). In the researcher's view, dynamic equivalence will result in translation which has a similar impact on the translation target audience as that which the original text had on the original target audience, in this case, the American viewers. The researcher feels that when it comes to subtitling a

television series, a ‘dynamic equivalence’ translation approach to subtitle translation will result in a more ‘effective translation’, also from a pragmatic translation theory point of view (cf. Baker, 1992).

In the researcher’s view, Newmark’s (1981) theories reflect the earlier theories proposed by Nida. Newmark proposes two quite different approaches to translation, labelling on Semantic Translation as opposed to Communicative translation. From the researcher’s perspective, Semantic Translation could be said to resemble what Nida describes as Formal Correspondence, while Communicative Translation could be said to be similar to what Nida describes as Dynamic Equivalence. If one takes a careful look at Newmark’s descriptions, one could say that Semantic Translation resembles more of a gloss, or word-for-word translation while Communicative Translation, which places more emphasis on the effect of the translation than the exact wording of the original text, resembles more of a sense for sense translation. Newmark (1981) suggests that strategies should be used according to the attributes of the text. For works of high literature, Newmark favours word-for-word translation in order to reflect the exact thought processes followed by the author of the original work. therefore, in translating serious literature, translation should respect the semantic and syntactic structures of the source language and should not allow omission and fundamental modification. In this circumstance, Newmark (1981) is interested in the integrity of the original work. For low level fiction (possibly including sitcoms such as *Friends*), Newmark would choose the message conveyed to the audience, rather than the literal wording, similar to what Nida called “the effect”. One could say that the type of textual discourse encountered in *Friends* might be described as a text that might warrant communicative translation, which could be said to warrant translation approaches that would enhance audience understanding. Again, in the researcher’s view, a communicative translation approach would result in a more effective translation – hence one could say that Newmark’s theories are still relevant today.

In the late 1990s translation theorists started to place more emphasis on cultural studies, following Snell-Hornby (1988/1995), Aixelá (1996) Brisset (2000), Davies (2003). In the researcher’s view, work by Aixelá (1996) and Davies (2003) in particular contains some very interesting taxonomies of translation choices in relation to the

translation of Culture Specific Items, which are very relevant to the present study. I will therefore discuss some of these in more detail under 2.6 below. Around the same time, theorists also started to devote research to audiovisual, screen and film translation (e.g. Hatim and Mason, and the focus of this study, subtitle translation comes under that heading. Subtitling will be discussed in more detail in the next section under 2.5 below.

2.5 Subtitling

Dubbing, in which the original dialogue is translated and recorded by other actors, is a common practice in European countries such as France and Italy. Audiences in those countries are interested more in hearing dialogue in their own language than in reading subtitles from the bottom of the screen (O'Leary, 2005). Dubbing is preferred by those who see subtitles as a visual intrusion. In action movies, for example, audiences might find it exhausting to read subtitles while following the actions of characters (Dutka, 2003). Meanwhile, subtitling has some requirements on the audience's literacy. In Mexico, dubbing is more welcome because 13% of the country's viewers do not read subtitles (Schechter, 1998).

The advantage of subtitling, compared to dubbing, is that it allows the audience to capture the character's original voice and gives a sense of authenticity. Dubbing's weakness is lack of synchronisation with lip movement (Dutka, 2003). Therefore, if the language of the audience differs greatly from that of the movie (in terms of grammar structure, syntax, and so forth), dubbing might not be appropriate. Lack of synchronisation can easily be observed by the audience.

As distinct from the translation of a text, the production of a subtitle has to coincide with audiovisual information visible on screen and audible on the sound track and therefore needs to overcome timing constraints. It is not easy to achieve synchronism between the spoken word and the actual subtitle. The rhythm of the film and the speech rhythms of characters or narrators are unique and sometimes not easy to be retained, if the lines happen to be hard to be comprehended or culture-bound (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). The dilemma is that while the length of subtitles is preferably determined by the length of sentences and phrases, some sentences and phrases cannot be explained clearly within the given time constraints. This may be said to be particularly true in

cases where cultural differences arise. Viewers from a culture might encounter problems in understanding a line in a movie from another culture and may be said to need to rely on extra explanation to assist comprehension (Thomas, 2007). However, if extra explanation is provided, synchronisation cannot be achieved (Thomas, 2007). This is very relevant in the context of the present study as it will be most interesting to examine how translators have addressed this problem in producing subtitles, for example, when translating the textual discourse accompanying US-made TV operas for a Mainland Chinese audience.

Apart from synchronisation, different authors agree (Loeb, 2009, Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998) that some other issues should be addressed by those involved in producing subtitles. An important benchmark against which subtitles are considered as good is the appropriateness of omission and translation (Loeb, 2009). As suggested above, the most challenging task in subtitle translation is to attain a fit between the length of subtitles and the character or narrator's rhythm of the film. In this circumstance, a good subtitle producer should decide the information that must be conveyed to the audience and the information that can be omitted (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). The producers of subtitles have to evaluate each line before deciding the best way of translating it. For example, omission is preferable in cases where the viewers have some understanding of the original (Loeb, 2009). In the researcher's opinion, most Chinese viewers in urban areas will know that fried chicken is obesity-inducing food, so there is no need for putting extra information such as "fried chicken-a kind of food causing obesity" to help Chinese viewers to understand the effect of fried chicken. However, as a general rule, omitting part of the dialogue has to be compensated by paraphrasing the rest of phrases and sentences (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). The research study will use some of the assessment tools described by Loeb (2009) and Ivarsson & Carroll (1998) in order to examine the degree in which omission is used by translators in producing subtitles and how omission might be assumed to contribute to the Chinese audience's understanding the lines of US produced television series like *Friends*.

Omission can be adopted as a strategy dealing with lines of which the audience has some basic understanding, but it is always possible that the speech made by a character is incomplete, or confusing and in some cases spoken words may not even make sense

(Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). In this case, the translator can exercise a higher level of discretion. Translation could then focus on the semantic meanings, rather than sentence structures. The researcher agrees with Ivarsson & Carroll that a mere reproduction of phrases and sentences cannot be justified on such occasions (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). For example, “never a word said” is not grammatically right and there is no need to translate it according to its original structure. The translator can translate this by looking into its semantic meanings- possibly “no word will be said”. The translator can make a decision according to the context in which the utterance was made. This is relevant to the current study as it is also concerned with analysing how contextual factors can be considered in the selection of a translation strategy.

Despite the fact that different strategies, such as omission and paraphrasing, can be used in subtitle production, it is important to note that none of these strategies can apply all circumstances. In many cases, the translator should consider a number of factors, for example, the knowledge of the intended audience, the nature of the films or programmes, before deciding on the most appropriate strategy to use (Dries, 1995). For example, if the programmes are artistic, literal or scientific, linguistic complexity will be formidable (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). The translator has to make sure that the meaning of the original sentence is conveyed to the audience and fits the scene without having to compromise the linguistic beauty of the source language (for instance, rhythm) (Dries, 1995). Selecting some TV operas which show a collection of different discourses in real life can help analyse the strategies chosen by subtitle producers in handling different sentences in different contexts.

In short, subtitling should preferably meet the following requirements. First, it should be concise, so it would not divert the viewer’s attention from the picture. Second, it should be synchronised with the characters’ or narrators’ statements and consider the source picture’s rhythm. Third, it should match the intent, contents and context of utterances and minimise the deviation from the source picture. Fourth, subtitling should be able to help viewers understand TV programmes or movies with ease. Brevity, synchronisation, reliability and efficacy are four major criteria against which subtitling is measured as good or bad. These criteria can also apply in the translation of lines. In the study of strategies used by subtitle producers in different contexts, these four criteria

can be used to gauge the performance of strategies chosen by subtitle producers.

By the very nature of their work, subtitle translators often have to deal with the translation of Culture Specific Items. The following section will deal with the specific problems involved in the translation of CSIs and will review some of the approaches and taxonomies advocated and described by various authors.

2.6 Translation of Culture Specific Items

There are two basic reasons why subtitle production can involve culture-specific items (CSIs). The first reason is that politeness could be indicative of cultural values and beliefs, as discussed earlier. The second reason is that Chinese culture and American culture may be said to exhibit many distinctive differences. CSIs refer to words and phrases that are linguistically represented in a source text but that might not exist in the target language culture (Aixelá, 1996). For example, in “if I had a wish, I’d wish for three more wishes” (a line from *Friends*), Chinese viewers do not have cultural background of “three wishes”, so they would not share the same understanding of this line as their American counterparts do. It is always interesting to identify CSIs that appear in TV operas and investigate how they are dealt with by subtitle producers.

There are a number of strategies that can be used in handling CSIs in translation. The first strategy is conservation, the strategy that reproduces the cultural sign in the source text despite the discrepancy between cultures (Baker, 2003). The risk of this strategy is that the target audience might not understand CSIs if they are not familiar with the source culture (Baker, 2003). For example, in *one flew over cuckoo’s nest*, the Chinese audience, who does not know the meaning of cuckoo’s nest, will have problems in linking cuckoo’s nest with the movie.

An alternative to cultural translation is the linguistic or pragmatic translation, if members of the target society are not bilingual and cannot easily absorb the aesthetic, informative, emotional or other effects of the source text (Baker, 2003). In this situation, sometimes, the translator can even use creation, i.e., adding extra information when appropriate (although not given by the TV program or movie itself) to help the audience understand CSIs. For example, in *Friends*, many dialogues mentioned some movie stars or singers. Creation can be used in this situation. By putting some extra information

about these stars of singers, the translator can help the audience figure out why these names are spoken of.

According to Baker (2001), pragmatics is an important ideology underlying translation, especially in translating utterances in daily communication. Because of the complexity of contextual factors in daily communication and the frequent occurrence of implicatures, translation should pay more attention to the actual meanings of utterances in different situations than on the literal meanings. In the researcher's view, language should not be interpreted identically regardless of contexts.

Omission and addition are two other strategies which might be used. The first of these, omission, involves CSIs being ignored if these items are difficult to translate or do not contribute significantly to the original text (Baker, 2003). Addition, on the other hand, is a method that allows the translator to supplement the translation by providing extra explanations at the end of the text. This method does not fit subtitling, because subtitles should match the utterances of the characters or narrators (Aixelá, 1996). Viewers would not read extra explanations at the end of a movie or TV programme. In the researcher's view, viewers' confusion with the movie or TV programme would impair their satisfaction with the subtitle. They would not expect to explore the meaning of a subtitle until the end of the programme. It is important to realise this fact, because the study is concerned about the audience's understanding of a movie or programme with the aid of the subtitle.

These strategies bear much resemblance to the strategies outlined in subtitle production. However, there is little research to date that has been directed toward the strategies that can be used to cope with "politeness" in subtitle production. A sentence that involves politeness can be seen as a culture-specific-item only when it reflects the difference between mainland China's culture and the US's culture. For example, talking about sex in public can be taken as acceptable in the US but not in China. Any sentence that is related to this can be a culture-specific-item that should be treated with a special translation approach taken.

In summary, there are a number of strategies that can be used by subtitle producers. Which strategy is the most appropriate depends on the extent to which CSIs can be understood easily by the intended audience and on the availability of an equivalent of

the CSI to be translated in the target culture. Other criteria to be considered include the alignment with the utterances of the characters. The next section will look at the implications of the various studies reviewed above for the methodological approach chosen for the present study.

2.7 Implications for methodological approach

It will be clear that various authors investigating cultural differences and translation approaches have used a range of methodological approaches. Hofstede (1973) examined cultural differences guided by the four benchmarks of individualism, power distance, uncertainty tolerance and masculinity. Nida examined the different features of various texts and proposed that different texts warrant different translational approaches depending on whether their function is mainly informative, expressive or persuasive. This is relevant to the current study in that it will be interesting to see whether the study can identify how the subtitle translators saw the function of the textual discourse which was the basis for their subtitle translations, especially taking into account that the soap opera which provided the data for this study may be said to be a sitcom, rather than a serious informative documentary.

Taxonomies proposed by Aixelá (1996) and Davies (2003) offer a useful tool for classifying the various translation approaches used by subtitle translators. As far as the researcher is aware, to date, no studies have used a methodology which has combined both Hofstede's use of the four benchmarks for discussing cultural differences with translation taxonomies and tools for assessing and usefulness and efficacy of subtitle translations as proposed by Loeb (2009). The researcher has chosen four criteria for judging subtitles' effectiveness, namely, brevity, synchronisation, reliability and efficacy, as articulated in theories proposed by Ivarson and Carroll (1998) and Driess (1995). These criteria provide a reliable framework against which to measure the audience's satisfaction with a subtitle.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the general differences between the Chinese culture and the American culture, the four major standards against which a subtitle is considered as successful and the strategies that can be used in dealing with CSIs. The chapter has also given a general introduction to the field of translation with a particular focus on subtitle translation and the area of Culture Specific Items. The chapter has outlined some known taxonomies of approaches to the translation of CSIs. A review of these theories is important to the direction of the research as it shows what criteria can be considered in measuring the strategies used by subtitle producers in handling CSIs that appear in US-made operas. This chapter has also identified a gap in the literature in that no study to date has combined Hofstede's (1973) use of the four benchmarks for describing cultural differences with the translation taxonomy proposed by Davies (2003) The next chapter will introduce the methodology used in the research study in more detail and will provide a detailed description for the analysis method used and the rationale for the same.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss the methodological approach and research design best suited to examine the research questions underpinning this study. This will be followed by an overview of the research design and its rationale. The research instruments comprised of a detailed analysis of each subtitle based on translation approaches and subtitle criteria presented in previous studies. The rationale for the method of subtitle analysis and its basis in previous studies will be explained. Possible limitations involving the chosen method are discussed together with measures taken to mitigate the same. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the preceding sections.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The aim of the current study was to investigate the strategies used by translators involved in subtitling the American sitcom series *Friends*, focusing in particular on subtitle translations involving scenes which featured Culture Specific Items (CSIs) and politeness. The literature review chapter covered a number of aspects that might affect the choices translators make when producing subtitles in general, and when translating between different cultures in particular. The literature review looked at cross-cultural differences and Hofstede's way of describing these in relation to different societies (Hofstede, 1973). The literature review presented a brief overview of translation studies, followed by a brief look at some recent taxonomies for categorising different approaches to the translation of Culture Specific Items (Aixelá, 1996; Davies, 2003; Shaio, 1996). This chapter will outline a methodological approach that was initially aimed at combining Hofstede's ideas with Aixelá's taxonomy as well as the rationale for adopting such a combined approach.

3.2. 1. Framework for methodological approach

The research looked at the way subtitle translators involved with subtitling the American television series *Friends* had dealt with CSIs in when translating oral

discourse into Chinese. A mainly qualitative method of analysis was chosen to operationalize this research question, based on earlier work by Hofstede (1973), Ivarson and Carroll (1998), Aixelá (1996) and Shaio (2006) as outlined below.

Previous research has focused on film translation, cultural differences, and translation of culture specific items. Film translation studies (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998) have used methodologies where the researchers used a transcript of the spoken discourse, combined with subtitle translations and back translations which were then analysed in terms of whether the discourse had been conveyed into the Target Language without major loss of (associative) meaning (e.g. Hatim & Mason, 2000; cf. also Nida, 1969). Subsequent studies on subtitle translation (Ivarsson, 1998) have identified important criteria for successful subtitle translation including brevity, efficacy, synchronisation and brevity (Dries, 1995; Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). Studies into cultural differences have focused on points of difference between different culture. Hofstede (1973) made a major contribution to this field by comparing different cultures in terms of four benchmarks, as outlined in the Literature Review. Lastly, studies focusing on the translation of Culture Specific Items (CSIs) have attempted to categorise various approaches followed by translators by coming up with different taxonomies (Aixelá, 1996; Davies, 2003; Shaio, 2006).

Aixelá (1996) proposes a variety of strategies that can be used in translating CSIs, including conservation (a strategy which conserves and reproduces the CSIs in the source text) and naturalisation (a strategy that finds an equivalent in the target text). Aixelá (1996) values the flexibility of handling CSIs, believing that members of the target society might not be able to comprehend all CSIs from an alien culture and that reproduction of CSIs by following the literal meanings of CSIs might not help the audience understand the original text as effectively as finding some pragmatic equivalents in the target culture. For example, “every dog has its day” is an English idiom, but “dog”, the CSI here, might not be easily comprehended by the Chinese audience. According to Aixelá, in this circumstance, a pragmatic equivalent can be found to translate the CSI, rather than translating the CSI based on its literal meaning. For example, “天生我材必有用”(which means that “every material can be used someday”) is a pragmatic equivalent in Chinese. Shaio (2006) categorises the strategies

proposed by Aixelá (1996) into 3 sub-categories: conservation, neutralisation and substitution. While conservation is source-text-oriented, substitution is target-text-oriented. Neutralisation lies in between these two, striking a balance between the source culture and the target culture.

The current study focused on strategies followed by Chinese translators providing subtitle translations for the American sitcom series *Friends*, in particular focusing on subtitles in relation to scenes dealing with politeness and cultural differences. This study can be placed within the framework of screen translation between American English and Mainland Chinese Mandarin, where these languages may be said to represent quite different cultural perspectives. The study therefore combined various aspects of the relevant literature, by transcribing spoken discourse, giving the subtitle translation and analysing the same in terms of important aspects of subtitle translation (cf. Ivarsson, 1998) as well as the different taxonomies proposed by Aixelá (1996) and Davies (2003). Added to this the researcher initially added the Hofstede (1973) approach to comparing the different cultures involved, i.e. American culture and Mainland Chinese culture, by also looking at subtitle translations in terms of Hofstede's four benchmarks of masculinity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and individualism (Hofstede, 1973). The latter approach was discontinued when the pilot study showed that most CSIs did not allow themselves to be easily aligned in accordance to Hofstede's benchmarks, suggesting that there was not much merit in continuing this approach in the context of the current study.

3.3 Data

The data was selected from a number of episodes of the American television series *Friends*, which had been subtitled in Mandarin Chinese, aimed at a mainly Mainland Chinese audience and available for viewing on the internet. *Friends* is a popular American television series, of the sitcom variety. A more or less random selection was made from those scenes were selected that contained CSIs or involved politeness in some shape of form. Its protagonists are half a dozen of young people living in New York and congregating regularly a café called Central Perk. The series follows these young people through a series of ups and downs in terms of their jobs and personal

relationships. Three important comments need to be made about the series, the translators and the Chinese viewers. Firstly, although this series is a sitcom and taken as such by American audiences, it seems likely that Chinese viewers will take the series to be a true reflection of life in the USA and that they will take what they see onscreen quite seriously. Secondly, it should be added that not much information is available about the translators, in terms of whether there was one or more translator at work, however, it is quite normal for translation work of this nature to be carried out by a group of translators. Equally, not much is known about the characteristics of the audience, however, the researcher worked on the assumption that they would predominantly be young viewers in the 20-35 year old age group.

3.4 Design and data selection

The design of the study involved selection of suitable scenes, transcription of original spoken discourse and analysis of the same, followed by transcription, back translation and analysis of the subtitle translation in terms of the various criteria outlined by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998). The translation taxonomy outlined by Aixelá (1996) was then used to categorise the translation strategy followed by the subtitle translator. Finally, a High Probability Translation Equivalent (HPTE) was suggested by the researcher drawing on Nida's definition of 'dynamic equivalence' (1969) and Newmark's definition of the 'communicative' approach to translation (1982). This HPTE was transcribed, analysed and classified in terms of the same criteria. This double-pronged approach was aimed to provide optimal information about the original strategy followed and whether any other strategy could have been used to render the translation more effective in terms of the translation criteria outlined. The next section will describe the data selection and analysis in detail.

3.5 Instruments

The research instruments for this thesis were mainly qualitative and involved an analysis of subtitles which was based on the work of AVT and screen translation theories (e.g. Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998) and the work of researchers in the area of CSI translation (e.g. Aixelá, 1996). Research instruments also involved a back translation

and a suggested High probability Translation Equivalent (HPTE) which was then also analysed in the same way as the original subtitle translations. Some quantitative element was added to the analysis by means of tables showing which translation approaches had been used proportionally.

3.5.1 Subtitle analysis

As outlined above, the analysis process was based on qualitative criteria for assessing the efficacy and reliability of screen translation in work by Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) as well as taxonomies for identifying approaches to the translation of CSIs proposed by Aixelá (1996). Initially, the researcher added a further element by also assessing where a CSI fitted in with the criteria for assessing Cross-Cultural differences as outlined by Hofstede (1973).

The first step consisted in choosing lines from scenes taken from the TV series *Friends* that contained CSIs, to see how these had been handled in subtitle translation. The assumption being that *Friends* displays many daily, ordinary social occasions involving CSIs which might not be understandable if the translator does not use the appropriate translation strategy. The second step involved identifying the translation strategies that had been used in translating these lines to deal with the CSIs, based on the taxonomy put forward by Aixelá (1996). These strategies are: conservation, omission, pragmatic translation, creation and addition. The literature review chapter contains a brief overview of these strategies and their primary differences.

The third step was assessing these strategies against standards put forward by Ivarsson and used to assess the quality of subtitle translation, including brevity, synchronisation, reliability and efficacy. The fourth step consisted in the researcher suggesting High probability Translation Equivalents (HPTEs) which might be used to achieve a more effective translation in terms of what Nida describes as ‘closest natural equivalent (1969, p. 13) and the ‘priority of contextual consistency over verbal consistency (Nida, 1969, p. 15). Previous studies (e.g. Crezee, 1988) have shown that such HPTEs may serve to clarify issues that affected the effectiveness of the original translation strategy, by showing what might have worked better. The final step involved in Summarizing what translation strategies I found had in fact been adopted in the

translation of subtitles for *Friends* and presenting a list of translation strategies that could have been adopted in order to achieve the closest natural equivalent.

3.5.2 The use of HPTEs

As Seliger and Shohamy (1989) have noted, a ready-made instrument can be made to match the specific research context with some revisions and adaptations. The current study combined several such ready made instruments in order to achieve its outcomes. Previous studies did not include HPTEs however, Crezee (1988) did follow this approach to good effect in her unpublished *doctoraalscriptie*. The idea behind the HPTE is based on Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence and is aimed at providing a translation that has a similar effect on the target audience as that which the original source text was to have had on the reader of the original (Nida, 1969). In my study, I have described this as 'effectiveness' rather than dynamic equivalence. I would define an effective HPTE as a translation that is the high probability translation equivalent in terms of both dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1969) and pragmatic equivalence (Baker, 1992). In my analyses, the HPTE serves to show how an alternative approach to the translation can lead to a more natural or reliable translation. The HPTE is analysed in terms of effectiveness.

3.5.3 Diagrammatic overview of data analysis

The researcher first of all presented a description of the (background to a) given scene, together with a transcription and back translation of the subtitle. She then analysed the various subtitle production strategies used in a given episode, such as omission, addition, paraphrasing and so forth, based on previous studies as outlined under 3.4.1 above. In addition, the researcher wanted to assess the usefulness and appropriateness of these strategies by measuring the subtitles against four criteria: brevity, synchronisation, reliability and efficacy. Finally, the researcher suggested a high probability translation equivalent (HPTE), i.e., the pragmatic translation equivalent and analysed this in terms of the same criteria.

A short overview of the data analysis method may be found reflected in the following table.

Table 3.1: Diagrammatic overview of data analysis

Description		
Lines	[Transcript of original text] [Chinese subtitle]	
Strategy used	[e.g. Repetition]	
Criteria	Brevity Reliability Synchronisation Efficacy	Concise or not [e.g. high, low] [was lip synching achieved] [comment on what result was achieved, and why the translation worked, or did not work; commenting on how Chinese audience would respond to it]
HPTE(High probability Translation Equivalent) & back translations		

3.5.4 Pilot study

The methodological approach used for the pilot analysis for the subtitle translations was also based on the combined work of translation theorists and sociologists like Hofstede. The method of analysis was amended slightly following the small pilot study, as outlined below. The analysis schedule for the pilot was divided into several sections and was very similar to that used for the main analysis. The second section of the analysis comprised transcription of the original script (spoken discourse in English), followed by transcription and back translation of the Chinese subtitle. The last section focused on the researcher providing a suggested High probability Translation Equivalent or HPTE, in order to highlight how the audience might have been better served if a different translation approach had been followed. This will be discussed in more detail below.

3.5.5 Implications of pilot analysis

The pilot analysis helped me to realize that the research instruments I had selected were appropriate for the type of subtitle translation analysis undertaken and an appropriate tool in relation to my research questions. As stated above the first pilot analysis has been described without the use of a table, while the second analysis was represented with the aid of a table. The researcher felt that the second manner of representation presented findings in a very clear and easy-to-see manner and decided to

use tables for the remainder of her analyses. Overall, the method of analysis attained the objectives of the study. It provided solid information which to use as a basis for assessing the translation strategies used by the translator in handling CSIs which then also helped the researcher to recommend an alternative.

3.6 Rationale for methodology and data selection

This section will present a rationale for the methodology and data selection used. Underpinnings for the methodology may be found in the work on screen translation and translation of CSIs presented in previous studies (Ivarsson & Carrol, 1998; Aixelá, 1996). The current study tested the approaches outlined by these authors. Since the study looked at the translation of CSIs, only those scenes were selected which involved various types of CSIs, to see how the translators had handled these. Similarly, since the study looked at scenes involving politeness, selection also involved scenes meeting that criterion. I will now go on to describe episode selection in more detail.

3.6.1 Selection of Episode

CSIs are wide-ranging and reflected in many life occasions. For this reason, it was important to choose a TV programme involving a range of such situations and hence *Friends* was chosen as a TV programme which might offer productive material for a study of subtitle translation approaches. *Friends* is one of the most popular and successful American TV series, which was watched by an estimated 5.2 million viewers in the US (Wikipedia, 2008.). The series has received dozens of rewards, including Emmy Awards, Golden Globe Awards and Screen Actors Guild Awards (Wikipedia, 2008.). In China, *Friends* has been recommended by many English-language-learning websites as offering important learning material, because its dialogues consist basically of daily English in different social settings, such as cafe's, friends' gatherings, office settings, weddings, home settings and so forth. Another reason for selecting this series was that dialogues in *Friends* involves everyday spoken expressions and idioms, something which is attractive to Chinese viewers who are keen to study the language used by Americans on a daily basis. The researchers selected 30 scenes taken from *Friends* in order to identify a range of utterances involving CSIs.

Friends has given people numerous opportunities to sample a US subculture, which is seen among white middle-income young urban professionals. However, the fact that *Friends* is a sitcom is likely to lead to some cross-cultural misunderstanding on the part of Chinese audiences. Obviously, humour is very much culture-bound and something that is seen as very funny in one culture, can be perceived as offensive in another culture. For example, in *Friends*, there are many jokes about Joey's strong sexual desire, but in China, jokes of this kind are rare in public. In addition, the researcher suspects that some Chinese viewers may in fact take *Friends* to be a serious reflection of life among young urban professionals in the USA, rather than as a sitcom.

As outlined above, *Friends* contains many elements intended to be taken humourously as well as Culture Specific Items. The study analyses the subtitle translations to see whether these can be said to have been effective in helping the audience understand the intentions and associations of the original source language (ST) utterances. The discussion summarized the most frequently used strategies and speculated on the reasons why these strategies are more frequently used than others.

In addition, the researcher chose ten to twelve episodes of *Friends* in order to identify all the utterances that involved the issue of "politeness". The researcher wanted to gauge the extent to which the politeness involved in the scene was different from its counterpart in the Chinese culture. As mentioned in the literature review, politeness can be reflected in language and behaviours adopted by people in social encounters. Language and behaviour patterns differ from culture to culture. The researcher can identify scenes and subtitles dealing with politeness issues to assess how effective the subtitle translations were. This will involve a degree of speculation about the potential response of a Chinese viewer watching such a scene. The researcher felt well-qualified to gauge such potential responses, as she herself was born and educated in Mainland China and belongs to the same age group as the potential audience. Moreover, as Vermeer (2000) points out, the translator is the 'expert' when it comes to cross-cultural aspects of 'translational action' (2000, pp. 229-230).

3.7 Data validity and reliability

The validity of data employed in any study, together with its reliability, are important issues to be addressed, as both go to the credibility of the study design, data collection and data analysis procedure. Seliger and Shohamy hold that reliability and validity are ‘the two most important criteria for assuring the quality of the data collection procedures’ (1989, p. 184). It is accepted in the field of translation studies, that assessing the quality of translation is very subjective. Therefore, to my mind, the issue of reliability largely hinges on the quality of translation assessment criteria. The current study has therefore drawn on the work of previous translation theorists in the area of screen translation and the translation of CSIs, including Ivarsson (1998), Ivarsson and Carroll (1998), Aixelá (1996), Davies (2003) and Shaio (2006). This leaves the data collection procedure which also needs to be consistent and accurate (Seliger and Shohamy 1989). The researcher herself acted as the ‘translational expert’ (Vermeer, 2000). To achieve reliability, in the present study, a qualitative approach to data collection was applied in order to enable issues to be examined from a number of perspectives. This approach involved the selection of scenes which referred to CSIs. The subtitle translations were transcribed as they appeared on the screen. As outlined above, a pilot study was undertaken in order to learn about the research process (cf. Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 30). Data validity relates to the extent to which a study or a set of instruments measures what it purports to measure (Seliger and Shohamy 1989). The questionnaire instrument adapted from work undertaken by Aixelá (1996) and Ivarsson (1998) and further explored by Shaio (2006) was shown to be a valid method of assessing the quality of translation work involving screen translation and CSIs.

3.8 Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study could be linked to assumptions about possible researcher bias. The results of the research are subject to the evaluation of the researcher. As the researcher is a Chinese-English bilingual and familiar with the US culture, the efficacy of the subtitles to be analysed might not be evaluated impartially. It is primarily because the researcher has the knowledge required to understand the lines and can understand the lines even without the aid obtained from the subtitle. It may be assumed that the

average Mainland Chinese viewer may not have such knowledge. The researcher has done her very best to ensure that comments and assessments were met the criteria of academic objectivity, by attempting to present an impartial analysis of dialogues. The researcher also did her best to focus on the translation of CSIs without indicating a bias towards either the US culture or Chinese culture. The philosophy of cultural relativism is that cultures are equally important – just different (Ghillyer, 2008). Chinese and American display dissimilar behavioural and linguistic patterns in order to follow the rules and norms of politeness. In addition, the researcher is aware that *Friends* is a sitcom which is most likely taken seriously (i.e. not viewed as a comedy) by Mainland Chinese viewers.

3.9 Ethical issues

The research did not involve human or animal participants, so no approval from the AUT Ethics Committee was needed as it is required in other research projects, in accordance with the ethical guidelines issued by The University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee (UAHSEC) and the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

3.10 Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of the aim, data selection criteria, data analysis methods and for the thesis. The methodological approach will combine approaches used in previous studies investigating part aspects of the focus of the current study, including cultural differences, translation taxonomies relating to CSIs and subtitle translation in general. This chapter has described a small pilot analysis with associated discussion of findings and recommendations for translation choices which might serve the audience better. The next chapter will present the pilot study, which reports on the pilot analysis which was done in order to test the suitability of the research instruments for the main analysis.

Chapter Four: Pilot analysis

Researchers such as Baker (1994, pp. 182-183) have pointed out the advantages of doing a pilot study before starting any research project. A pilot study can involve trying out of a particular research instrument, and might tell the researcher whether the proposed method of research may be inappropriate or too complicated. Prior to embarking on the main analysis, the proposed method of analysis for the current study was tested out by doing a pilot analysis of a small number of scenes.

This chapter will describe the pilot analysis of a few scenes selected from the data in order to test out the method of analysis. Scenes were selected in the manner as outlined on page 37. A description of this pilot analysis is presented below. Each scene is first described, and some background information provided as to where the scene fits in the series. This is done in order to assist the reader in gaining a better understanding of the analysis. The CSI is underlined and the Chinese subtitle provided. A back translation of the subtitle is then given, followed by an assessment of the effectiveness of the subtitle, first in terms of screen translation criteria (cf. Ivarsson, 1998) and then in terms of CSI translation strategies (drawing on Aixelá's 1996 taxonomy). The first pilot analysis has been described without the use of a table, while the second analysis was represented with the aid of a table. This is followed by a summary of the analysis as an appropriate research instrument for the study, together with the implications of the pilot analysis for the main study.

4.1 Pilot analysis scene 1

a) Description of Scene:

Ben, Ross's son, is playing with a doll. Ross is a little bit uncomfortable with this scene. His ex-wife, Susan Bunch, a lesbian woman, has the custody of Ben. Ross worried that his son, who is raised in a household headed by two women, would end up with being a homosexual as well.

b) Line:

Ross: "Why does he have it again?"

Susan Bunch: "He's got a doll, so what? Unless you're afraid he's gonna grow up to be

in show business.”

c) The Subtitle:

Ross: “为什么他有这么一个洋娃娃？”

Susan Bunch: “他是有洋娃娃，那又如何？除非你担心他长大后在演艺圈里。”

Back translation: he has a doll, so what? Unless you are worried that he will be in the entertainment industry.

d) Strategies of Subtitle Production Used:

The translator has used a semantic strategy in order to produce this subtitle. A semantic strategy is a strategy that translates the source text according to its literal meaning and grammatical structure.

e) Evaluation of the Strategy:

- Brevity

The subtitle has met this criterion. It has not added any additional words that the original line did not have.

- Synchronisation

The subtitle is synchronised with the original line while it is being uttered by the character.

- Reliability

The subtitle does not distort the original meaning of the line, but neither does it fully display the original meaning. A doll has a cultural meaning. Only girls will have dolls and dolls are designed for girls. The show business means the business of strippers. Exposure to girls' toys might create confusion in relation to self-identity (in terms of gender). This line was meant to disparage Ross, who harboured the notion that a boy who plays with girls' toys will become an effeminate man.

- Efficacy

The line is supposed to amuse the audience. However, Chinese viewers would not laugh, firstly because they are not familiar with the intended cultural meaning of the doll (which is culture-specific-item). Barbie dolls are not popular in China, however it may be said that Chinese people are not as strongly aware of the fact that Barbie dolls are only intended for girls as Americans are. Playing with Barbie dolls is not a strong predictor of one's sex identity. Fathers in China would not be as anxious when they see

their sons playing with Barbie dolls as Ross was in *Friends*. Secondly, Chinese viewers would likely not be aware of any association between a doll and the show business.

In the researcher's view, the most noticeable weakness of the subtitle is its adherence to semantic strategy. “演艺圈”-the word that is used to translate “show business” is in fact inconsistent with the meaning of “show business”. “演艺圈” means the entertainment industry in Chinese, a catch-all word that includes TV production, filmmaking and so forth. Therefore, Chinese viewers would very probably not understand why Ross is anxious, as the entertainment industry is basically a profitable and enviable occupation.

f) A Recommended Alternative to the Original Subtitle:

The strategy here should be a combination of semantic, pragmatic and addition. A pragmatic Strategy is a strategy that allows the translator to find a pragmatic equivalent of the source text, instead of merely closely adhering to the syntax of the source text. A pragmatic equivalent of the source text entails a representation of the original meaning and intent of the author of the source text. The semantic strategy by comparison, focuses on the literal meaning and the syntax of the source text only, regardless of whether the translation fails to convey the intent of the author or the implications of the source text. Addition is the strategy that allows the translator to add ‘messages’ in order to help the audience understand the meaning of the line. Such messages might include background information that assists the audience to understand the traits of a culture unfamiliar to them.

The original subtitle could be rendered as: “他是有女孩才玩的洋娃娃，那又如何？莫非你担心他长大后去跳脱衣舞？” This new subtitle can be back translated in English as: “He's got a girl's doll, so what? Unless you are afraid he's gonna grow up to be a stripper.” The addition would make Ross's unspoken fear explicit. The Chinese audience is also more likely to understand what Ross was concerned about.

4.2 Summary of analysis

The above method of analysis was straightforward and easy to implement. The criteria identified by earlier theorists (Ivarsson, 1998; Aixelá, 1996) were easy to combine and easy to use. The findings of the analysis were here presented in flowing prose, however, for the next part of the pilot analysis, the researcher decided to insert the analysis into a table in order to achieve an easier and quicker overview of its findings and to compare this format with that of the ‘flowing prose’ format illustrated above. It should be noted that the table has been split here, in order to prevent it from spreading across pages.

4.3 Pilot analysis scene 2

What follows is the analysis of another scene taken from the series, using the same criteria, but presented in table format in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1

Pilot analysis scene 2

Description	In this scene, Ross prompted everybody to get ready and dressed as soon as possible because the time was running out. They were scheduled to attend a donation banquet hosted by the museum Ross was working for. However, Ross was so anxious that he yelled at Rachel and pushed her to get dressed immediately. Rachel was mad and went back to her bedroom. When she came out, she was wearing sweat pants and a sweatshirt.
Lines	Ross: “Um. I know it says black tie optional, but, um this may be pushing it a little, um.” “我知道单子上写“打领带与否,自行决定”,但你这样好象过分随便了?”

Table 4.1

Pilot analysis scene 2 - continued

Strategy used	Repetition. The translator reproduced the “black tie”, the CSI in the target text.	
Criteria	Brevity	It is not concise. “Black tie optional” is translated into “打领带与否, 自行决定”, which means “you can decide whether you wear a black tie or not.”
	Reliability	Reliability is low. Although it specifies “black tie”, it is an umbrella term which refers to formal dress. It does not mean that “black tie” is the boundary between formality and casualty. Instead, “black tie” implies formal dress here.
	Synchronisation Efficacy	The subtitle is synchronized with the character’s statement. Translating “black tie” directly here is an awkward way of dealing with CSI. Chinese viewers are well informed of the habit of wearing a black tie in the western world. Many of them are aware that wearing a black tie means formal dress in the business setting or on formal occasions. However, they would be confused about why this dress code applies on women as well. Rachel should not be blamed by not wearing a black tie.
HPTE (High probability Translation Equivalent) & back translations	恩, 虽然单上说“并非一定需要正式着装”, , 但你这样好象过分随便了? “Um. I know it says “formal dress is not compulsory”, but, um this may be pushing it a little, um.” [remember to add in speech marks] The most intriguing in the translation is how to convey the meaning of the original sentence to the audience. The original sentence does not require every guest to dress formally, but it implies that formal dress is preferred. While the CSI, “black tie” does not assist the audience to understand the context (as wearing a “black tie” is not a dress code among women), it can be eliminated and replaced by a practical equivalent in the target culture. This strategy is absolute universalisation. “Formal dress” is known to either the US audience or the Chinese audience.	

4.4 Implications of the pilot analysis

The pilot analysis helped me to realize that the research instruments I had selected were appropriate for the type of subtitle translation analysis undertaken and an appropriate tool in relation to my research questions. As stated above the first pilot

analysis has been described without the use of a table, while the second analysis was represented with the aid of a table. The researcher felt that the second manner of representation presented findings in a very clear and easy-to-see manner and decided to use tables for the remainder of her practical analyses.

Overall, the method of analysis attained the objectives of the study. It provided a good tool for evaluating the efficacy etc of the subtitle translation as defined by Ivarsson (1998) and also for evaluating the various translation strategies used by the translator in handling CSIs (cf. Aixelá, 1996) and recommending an alternative (cf. Nida, 1969; Baker, 1992). Justifications were added to each analysis to assist subtitle translation assessment and recommendations. If a sufficient number of scenes are analysed, this method of analysis will assist the researcher in drawing a conclusion over what strategies are mostly used by a translator and what strategies appear to be the most useful in terms of the criteria outlined above. The following chapters will present analysis and findings of scenes involving politeness, followed by scenes involving different types of Culture Specific Items and their subtitle translations.

Chapter Five: Scenes involving politeness

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a discussion of findings in the framework of the cultural difference concerning politeness, which was brought up in the literature review. It will start with a discussion of the findings in relation to the four benchmarks, power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and individualism against which different cultures can be measured (Martin & Nahayama, 2000; Hofstede, 1973). This will be followed by a discussion of politeness theory in relation to findings. Next I will move on to a discussion of how the translators handled the constraints of subtitled as there were outlined in the literature review.

5.2 Four benchmarks

5.2.1 Power distance

Firstly I will look at examples of power distance (Hofstede, 1973). Power distance deals with the extent to which uneven distribution of power between members of society is accepted within that society. I must stress here that Chinese viewers will very likely not be aware that the series *Friends* is a comedy and not to be taken seriously. Hence any outrageous behaviour used by the script writers of the series *Friends* to vea laugh from the audience will most likely be taken to be a true reflection of US society by the Chinese viewers.

The first scene I will present is found in Season 6, episode 6, scene 3.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, at a work party, Chandler introduced his boss, Doug, and his wife to Monica. It is clear that although Doug is Chandler's boss, they are really likely a couple of friends. Doug even slapped Chandler's on his backside, as did Doug's wife.

b) Line:

Doug: "Hey Bing! (slaps him on his backside and sees Monica) Wo-ho-ho, Who's the pretty lady and what the hell is she doing with you?"

- c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In China, it is difficult for any employee to make friends with his/her superior outside the workplace. In the workplace, people behave and speak to show respect to their superiors. Superiors expect their subordinates' submissive behaviours. The relationship between the employer and employees is rigid and formal. People adapt their words and behaviour to fit their roles. People accept the difference between roles, which results from power distance.

Therefore, Chinese viewers are maybe surprised by how Doug behaved (slapping an employee's backside) and spoke (using the word "the hell"), since they will most probably not be aware that the series is a comedy and not to be taken seriously. In fact, of course, Doug's behaviour is not normal in the US either, and this behaviour is designed by the playwright to elicit a laugh from the audience. Being a subordinate does not necessarily mean being inferior to the supervisor.

5.2.2 Masculinity

Masculinity refers to how men's power is superior to women's in society and is measured by the roles of men and women in society. In general, a society that scores high in masculinity is to emphasise ambition, assertiveness and gender differences. By comparison, a society which scores high in femininity stresses caring behaviours and less differentiated gender roles (Hosftede, 1973).

The first scene I will present is found in Season 2, episode 3, scene 6.

The second scene I will present is found in Season 6, episode 6, scene 3.

- a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Ross asked Rachael for opinions about when to have sex.

- b) Line:

"Let me tell you something. As a woman there is nothing sexier than a man who does not want to have sex."

- c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In China, sex is basically a taboo subject between people of the opposite sex, even if the people in the conversation have long known each other.

While sex is perceived as a basic pleasure for human beings (regardless of gender), it

is considered as something disgraceful from Chinese women's point of view. Chinese women believe that telling a man (except their husband or boyfriend) how they get pleasure from sex is the last thing they will do in the world. It is not to say that the American women are open to sex and can talk about sex openly to either strangers or those they are acquainted with. However, in view of the fact that in a Confucianism society, a woman's role is submissive; even expressing their views in public can be considered as inappropriate, let alone touching on the topic of sex.

5.2.3 Individualism vs collectivism

Another benchmark against which the culture is measured, individualism, refers to the extent to which one considers his/her own interests or opinions more important than those of the group he/she belongs to. In a society that scores high in individualism, people are less likely to be integrated into groups and ties between individuals are loose. By comparison, in a collectivistic society, people are integrated into cohesive ingroups such as extended families in favour of loyalty to these groups as group members (Hofstede, 1973).

An example that illustrates how the American society is individualistic is found in Season 2, episode 5, scene 5

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, they arranged a dinner and a birthday party but Rachel, Joey and Phoebe did not have much money. However, when Chandler, Monica and Ross would like to pay for the expense for them, they rejected this as a kind of charity and became upset.

b) Line:

Joey: "Look, it's a nice gesture, it is. But it just feels like-charity."

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In China, a country which has a collectivistic culture, it is customary that one pays for a dinner or a party while other people do not need to pay. It is not unusual that a Chinese host arranges a luxury dinner even though he/she cannot afford it. It is a way of protecting "face".

Going Dutch is rare. Whenever one has financial problems, he/she turns to other

people for help (such as personal borrowings). In future, he/she might reciprocate when those who help him/her are in trouble. It is how the collectivistic society develops. They are not ashamed of receiving help from their friends or family members. Sometimes the money borrowed from friends or family can be a big sum and no interest is charged on such borrowings. Americans are more independent, willing to keep their lifestyles even with friends or family members who are much richer. They are more willing to handle their personal finance as their personal issues and seek support from banks. It is not to say that American people are not willing to help each other or do not appreciate reciprocating relationships, but they appear to be more financially independent than Chinese people. They do not link paying for a bill for their friends or family with a means of saving face as much as Chinese people do. The difference is that the American people might consider it embarrassing relying on their friends for finance, but the Chinese people are less likely to have this feeling.

Another scene is found in Season 8, episode 8, scene 7.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Monica wanted to book a stripper for Chandler's bachelor party, as a compensation for her own bachelorette party. However, the stripper turned out to be a prostitute. Monica rushed home and wanted to stop the stripper.

b) Line:

Monica: "She's a hooker! She's a hooker! She's a... (stops as she sees her). Hi! Uh, we spoke on the phone."

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

It might surprise the Chinese audience that a wife recruits a stripper or prostitute for her husband. It is even more surprising when Monica is polite to the prostitute. It seems that Monica considers it disrespectful when stating that "She's a hooker!" She changed her tone immediately and shook her hand with the prostitute.

This indicates that in the US, the society is not collectivistic as it is in China. Because of the collectivistic culture, hierarchy endures, in which people are believed to have different social statuses. The prostitute, an occupation still illegal in China, is considered inferior. Some occupations are believed to be inferior to others. For example, waitresses and waiters are considered to be inferior to restaurant guests. In the US, the sense of

hierarchy is not as strong as it is in China. There are occupations that are widely accepted as commonplace among the upper class, for example those who practice law. However, it does not mean that some people would lose their rights to deserve other people's respect because of their occupations. For example, in China, the prostitute is a sex slave and should not be treated with any respect as it applies for other occupations. As shown in *Friends*, Monica tries to remain courteous when greeting the prostitute. This is unlikely to happen in China.

The next scene I will present is found in Season 2, episode 11, scene 13.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Ross' ex-wife, Carol, is to get married with her lesbian partner, Susan. However, Carol is upset because her parents did not attend the wedding. Ross is trying to appease Carol and cheer her up.

b) Line:

Carol: "And then Susan and I got in this big fight because I said maybe we should call off the wedding and she said we weren't doing it for them, we were doing it for us, and if I couldn't see that, then maybe we should call off the wedding. I don't know what to do."

Ross: "I uh cannot believe I'm gonna say this, but I think Susan's right."

Carol: "You do?"

Ross: "Look, do you love her? And you don't have to be too emphatic about this."

Carol: "Of course I do."

Ross: "Well then that's it. And you don't have to be too emphatic about this."

Carol: "Of course I do."

Ross: "Well then that's it. And if George and Adelaide cannot accept that, then the hell with them. Look, if my parents didn't want me to marry you, no way that would have stopped me. Look, this is your wedding. Do it."

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

Ross's statement maybe surprising to many Chinese viewers. In a collectivistic society, one's marriage is not simply one's own decision or benefit and should be taken as an honour or decision of the whole family. There are some exceptions, but in general, parents plan and give their opinions about their child's marriage.

Let alone, children too often rely on parents for money essential to a marriage, such as housing. Parents play an important role in one's life, so their opinions can hardly be ignored. Ross's statement might shock senior viewers.

Meanwhile, it indicates that the US has an individualistic culture, in which people tend to focus on their own decision making power. They are willing to make decisions which might not receive support from their parents, friends or other members of ingroups they belong to. In making decisions about marriages, for example, American people might follow their feelings rather than conceding their decision making power to their parents.

Another scene illustrating this is found in Season 2, episode 18, scene 3.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Richard, Monica's boyfriend, is to stay at Monica's overnight. They kiss each other. Ross is around and becomes embarrassed.

b) Line:

Monica: "Ya know, I was thinking. You know how we always stay at your apartment? Well, I thought maybe tonight we'd stay at my place."

Richard: "I don't know, I don't have my pajamas."

Monica: "Well, maybe you don't need them (starts to kiss and hug Richard)."

Ross: "My baby sister, ladies and gentlemen."

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In this scene, it is clear that American people are more likely than Chinese people to express their feelings by acts, such as kissing and hugging. Although Ross is not comfortable with Monica's acts showing intimacy, Monica has chosen to do it and also asked Ross to "shut up". This is to show that in an individualistic society, people are more likely to show their feelings and emotions than those in a collectivistic society, who are more likely to conceal their feelings and emotions in an attempt to keep them similar to the emotions of other members of the same intergroup.

In China, kissing in public especially in a place like a coffee shop, which is filled with people, is a rare scene. People have been raised to conceal their feelings and act as other people do in public. Chinese people are raised in an environment where kissing,

an act showing intimacy, should occur at the absence of other people, because kissing is not a group norm or social norm. Chinese people are conditioned to control their emotions in public to conform to the behaviour patterns of people around them. They would hardly say “shut up” to their family members in public. This can cause a loss of face to these members, endangering the harmony of the group.

It is not to say that “shut up” is acceptable among American people and American people do not refrain from acts that make other people feel uncomfortable in public. What can be stressed here is the fact that while American people might use “shut up” much more frequently than Chinese people in their daily discourse among friends and family members, very often for teasing, the Chinese people try to avoid using “shut up”, fearing that this hurts other members of the same ingroup. It is important to note that *Friends* is a sitcom, so Monica’s act should not be considered as commonplace in the US. It might also suggest that the US people are more likely to express their personal feelings than Chinese people, even though their feelings are inconsistent with the feelings of other members of intergroups.

5.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance measures the extent to which people can bear uncertainty and accept rules to guide and restrict their behaviours. It is about whether members of a society are comfortable with unstructured situations. People in societies where uncertainty are highly tolerant are more emotional and motivated by their own philosophies and beliefs (Hofstede, 1973)

The first example I would like to present is found in Season 3, episode 15, scene 12.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Ross hired a barbershop quartet and sent the quartet to Rachel’s office to celebrate Rachel’s first day at her new job. The lyrics designed by the quartet can be surprising to many Chinese viewers.

b) Line:

Quartet: “Congratulations on your first week at your brand new job! It won’t be long before you the boss. And you know who will be there to support...you?! Your one and only boyfriend...”

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In China, the workplace is bound by strict rules and well-recognised norms. Chinese people comply with rules in order to avoid uncertainty. However, in this scene, it appears that American people accept a quartet in the workplace and Rachel's table is covered with all flowers and gifts sent by Ross. This might be unusual even in the US (sending a quartet to an office), but it at least indicates that people in the US can possibly accept this and would not forbid it.

Meanwhile, it is not reasonable to hint that an employee aims to be the boss someday in future, in a culture where hierarchy persists and people are conscious of power distance. Chinese viewers have difficulty of understanding how Ross sent a quartet to Rachel's office. This action would not benefit Rachel but cause damage to her if it happened in China. It is probable that an employee in China who is perceived by his/her supervisor as a threat can easily be marginalised.

5.3 Analysis of subtitle translation by lines

In this section, I will select a number of scenes in which cultural differences between the Chinese culture and the US culture might be observed. It is important to note that *Friends* is a sitcom, the behaviours of characters are exaggerated and outrageous to amuse the audience. For this reason, it is not rational to state that these characters' behaviours are actual representation of American people's behaviours in everyday life. However, these scenes can be used to illustrate the possible differences between two cultures. The analysis will be carried out against four benchmarks, power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism.

The first scene I will present is found in Season 2, episode 3, scene 1.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Joey tried to imitate sex sounds of Chandler's girlfriend.

b) Line:

Joey: "Oh, Chandler, now. now. that is it! Faster! Faster!"

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In China, sex is a sensitive taboo. It might be usual for people of the same sex to talk about sex privately or make jokes about sex. However, it is offensive when

men talk about sex when women are present.

Another scene is found in Season 3, episode 12, scene 1.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Rachel is choosing her dress for her first day at the new job. She runs out from her bedroom, wearing only a towel, asking Chandler about whether he likes her shoes. Chandler appeared to focus more on Rachel's towel than on her shoes.

b) Line:

Rachel: "Okay, hey, umm. Does everybody hate these shoes?"

Chandler: "Oh yeah, but don't worry. I don't think anybody's gonna focus on that as long as you're wearing that towel dress."

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

In the US, "sexy" can be taken as a compliment. However, in China, "sexy" is hardly used in daily communication between friends.

It is offensive and can be taken as a kind of sexual harassment. For people of the opposite sex, they would not use "sexy" when issuing a comment on each other's dress, despite having known each other for a long time. Using this sort of language would also be against the concept of intergroup harmony.

A similar example is found in Season 6, episode 6, scene 3.

a) Description of Scene:

In this scene, Monica is about to live with Chandler, while Rachel has to move out from the apartment. They are planning to dine out as a celebration. Phoebe is so happy that she wants to double the happiness by stating that it is her birthday as well.

b) Line:

Monica: "Well, instead of being sad that tonight is my last night together with Rachel we thought we'd go out to dinner and celebrate the fact that Rachel is moving in with Phoebe."

Phoebe: "And also, my birthday."

Monica: "It's not your birthday."

Phoebe: "What a mean thing to say! I would never tell you it's not your birthday!"

c) Possible clues for cultural differences.

Intergroup harmony is very important to Chinese people. It is mean to describe a friend's statement as "mean" in the Chinese culture, unless the speaker does not want to continue the friendship with the recipient of the statement.

It also indicates that Americans tend to be outspoken even if their words might be blunt. However, Chinese people prefer to conceal their feelings, in the belief that direct expression of their feelings can hurt other members of the intergroup and pose a threat on the intergroup harmony. It does not mean the American people use offensive language and do not know courtesy. Instead, they would not take it as seriously as Chinese people do if their friends say something such as "shut up".

5.4 Summary of chapter

Humour is one of the most challenging task for subtitle writers. What appears to be funny from the perspective of one cultural group might not be understood as something amusing in another cultural group. Chinese viewers are not likely to realize that *Friends* is not intended to be taken seriously, so they are guided to believe that how characters behave in *Friends* is a representation of American people's behaviours in everyday life. The consequence of this is that Chinese viewers may feel alienated from what they see. To address this problem, subtitle producers might have to eliminate some statements which highlight cultural differences, for example those which touch on sensitive issues.

Chapter Six: Main analysis and discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the subtitle translations chosen by the Chinese subtitle writers for *Friends*. I will provide a back translation for each of the Chinese subtitle translations followed by comments analysing the translation strategy, followed by an assessment of the subtitle's effectiveness in terms of several parameters. Added to this will be a suggested translation in terms of the High probability Translation Equivalent (HPTE). I feel this will be a useful addition, as it may give the readers more insight into the original translation and where it may have been insufficient in clarifying the associations viewers in the US would have had when listening to the original discourse.

6.2 Discussion of subtitle translations by type of culture specific reference

All scenes chosen for analysis contained Culture Specific Items (CSIs). Many CSIs referred to American 'institutions', food choices or to people or characters well-known in American culture, either because they appeared in television shows or movies or in politics. Some of the CSIs referred to shops or places which are well-known in the USA such as the Sunglass Hut. American television audiences will have associations with all these, however it is likely that the Chinese subtitle translators were not always aware of these associations, as may for instance be seen from the translation of the 'barn raising scene in Witness', which is one of the examples discussed in this chapter.

An attempt was made to present this discussion in a logical order by grouping CSIs together according to the type of CSI involved. Subtitle translations of CSIs will be discussed according to whether they concerned general references to American culture, references to American movies or television series, and references to American 'institutions'). This classification into three different groups of references did not always prove successful in that some scenes included more than one type of cultural reference. In such cases, the reference was classed under one or the other group, according to what the researcher felt was the more dominant reference.

6.2.1 General references to American culture

In Season 3, Episode 1, Scene 5, Ross is being called a dog. The translator has used repetition to reproduce the CSI “dog” in the target text. This meets the criterion of conciseness, and that of synchronization, but not that of reliability, because although “dog” is derogatory in both Chinese culture and US culture (at least in this context), the associated cultural meaning is different. In the original source text, the word “dog” is used to denote somebody who did something bad. To a Chinese audience, however, “dog” means somebody whose rank is low. In other words, to the Chinese viewers, the word dog is synonymous to a follower, or even a slave. Therefore, when repetition is used as the strategy, the Chinese audience might be confused, seeing that Ross did not do something that shows he is inferior to anybody.

My recommended translation strategy would involve “你是个不专一的人”, as in my view this would provide the High probability Translation Equivalent in that it means “You are a disloyal man”, which neatly conveys the intended and pragmatic meaning of the Source Text. Hence, in this case, it would appear that the translator did not understand the appropriate cultural association, which may have led him or her to translate the word by means of the strategy of repetition.

Another general cultural reference concerns the range of well-known American ice cream flavours. In Season 1, Episode 1, Scene 5, Ross is upset because he has just divorced his wife after she identified with being gay. His friends Joey and Chandler are trying to cheer him up and Joey makes an analogy between women and ice creams. Ross says: “You know what the scariest part is? What is there is only one woman for everybody, you know? I mean what if you get one woman and that’s it? Unfortunately, in my case, there was only one woman for her. Joey replies: “What are you talking about? One woman? That’s like saying there is only one flavour of ice cream for you. Lemme tell you something, Ross. There’s lots of flavours out there. There’s Rocky Road and Cookie Dough and Bing! Cherry Vanilla. You could get them with Jimmies, or nuts or whipped cream! This is the best thing that ever happened to you! You got married, you were, like, what, eight? Welcome back to the world! Grab a spoon! (抓住勺子).”

The translator has used non-cultural translation as the strategy and has translated

“grab a spoon” directly. However, the resulting translation is not reliable, because the translator has used “勺子” (ladle) rather than “调羹”(spoon). Ladles are large and deep and are normally used to serve soup. This does not fit the context where Joey is talking about ice cream. The audience does not know why Joey mentions a ladle here and will feel confused. Hence, one can also say that the translation is not effective as the association between a ladle and ice cream is remote. Chinese viewers do not have a CSI which uses the expression of grabbing a spoon. In addition, they are not familiar with a metaphor where choosing between different women is compared to choosing between different flavours of ice cream.

My suggestion for the HPTE would be:

“挑你喜欢的冰激淋吃” which translates as “Just eat whatever ice cream you pick up.” To achieve the HPTE, deletion is used as the strategy. In this context, grabbing the spoon is not accessible to the audience, not only because spoon is polysemic and cannot be translated easily but also because it is remotenot immediately associated with ice cream in this context. Chinese viewers cannot draw a link between the spoon and the ice cream. Nor can they understand that grabbing a spoon means picking up your favourite ice cream or a woman randomly. The translator can extend the line to “grab a spoon and eat whatever ice cream you like”, but this line will not be synchronised with the character’s statement. The original sentence is short and a long sentence would not match the character’s lip movements.

Yet another general cultural reference to is found in Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 12, where Joey’s Mum refers to Sting, when she says: “Look, honey, in an ideal world, there would be no her, and your father would look like Sting. The Chinese subtitle reads: “在一个理想的世界,应该不会有一个她,你父亲也长得象史汀一样帅” which means: “Your father is as handsome as Sting.” The translator used repetition as the strategy. The translator translated Sting directly, however the reliability of this translation is medium, because Sting definitely has more qualities than his appearance to make people remember him. The translation is not effective, because although Sting is a famous musician in the USA, in China, his reputation is limited. The audience would not know how handsome Sting is. This might not bother the audience much as this line is not important in its context. However, the translator could have handled it more effectively.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

“在一个理想的世界，应该不会有一个人她，你父亲才貌双全” which can be back translated as: “In an ideal world, there would be no her, and your father would be both attractive and talented.” Here, deletion was used as the strategy. As Chinese viewers are not familiar with Sting, it is reasonable that the translator deletes this reference and uses its association of “attractive and talented” as an alternative to describe an ideal man. This is also reliable, because Sting is attractive and well-talented. Another strategy is that the translator puts some extra explanation to assist the audience to learn about Sting (for example, putting a note that Sting is a famous singer). However, most Chinese viewers cannot picture Sting unless they check the Internet and see Sting’s photograph. Therefore, deletion can be said to be the best strategy here.

Yet another general cultural reference is found in Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 11, where Monica and Phoebe have met a handsome man. When Monica whistled to attract his attention, the man was hit by a car, ending up in a vegetative state. Monica and Phoebe visit him very often, including shaving his beard, rubbing his body and so forth. They are starting to speculate on the man’s name (because the hospital cannot find his identification). Phoebe suggests his name might be Glen, but Monica says that is not special enough to which Phoebe replies: “Ooh! How about Agamemnon?” the Chinese subtitle reads: “你觉得阿格马依如何？” Here, the translator has again used repetition as the strategy, by translating the name directly. This is not effective. This strategy was acceptable when the translator translated the name “Glen” directly, because it is ordinary. However, the translation of “Agamemnon” should not be treated in the same manner, because the translator should account for why Agamemnon is special. Otherwise, Chinese viewers cannot figure it out themselves.

My suggested HPTE would be:

“你觉得阿格马依如何？（阿格马依是古希腊人，以用情不一出名。）” which translates back as: “How about Agamemnon? (Agamemnon was an ancient Greek, who was famous for his affairs with many women.)” To achieve this HPTE, creation was used as the strategy. In my view, the translator can put a reference in the bracket to give some background information about who Agamemnon was. Chinese viewers will understand why the audience laughed when Phoebe came up with this name. Since both

Phoebe and Monica had a crush on the man in the vegetative state, the use of the name Agamemnon is some sort of in-joke, which refers to the fact that Phoebe does not care whether the man has two women simultaneously. The explanation is concise and would not carry across on to the next other line.

Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 21 contains a well-known cultural reference in the USA. In this scene, Monica has made friends with “fake Monica”, the woman who stole Monica’s credit card. Monica visited “fake Monica” in the prison after the latter was arrested. “fake Monica” brought Monica to do something special and interesting, so Monica became anxious, believing that she had to live the same life she did before she met “Fake Monica”. Monica: “ not necessarily...”

Fake Monica: “ Yes, necessarily! I mean, I don’t know what it is, maybe it’s the Amish thing. ”

Monica: “Um, I’m not actually Amish.”

“我不知道为什么，或许和你是阿米许人有关” The translator used repetition as the strategy, by translating Amish directly (according to its pronunciation). It is reliable, however it is not effective, since the Chinese viewers do not know that the name Amish refers to a group of people who resist changes and keep traditional ways of life and who are currently concentrated mainly in Pennsylvania. Hence, Chinese viewers will not have any idea of why Amish are mentioned here.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

“我不知道为什么，可能因为你是阿米许人（居住在美国的一群守旧的、拒绝改变生活的人）” This translates as: “ I don’t know what it is, maybe it’s the Amish thing (a group of people who live in the US and are famous for following traditions and rejecting changes.) ” Here, creation was used as the strategy. As Chinese viewers are not familiar with Amish, it is important to add some additional information to describe the Amish. If Chinese viewers realize that Amish people reject changes, they will understand why “fake Monica” draws an analogy between Monica and the Amish. They will understand that Monica has got used to her way of life and as a result cannot change her life much.

Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 17 also contains a general cultural reference in the shape of the placename Colonial Williamsburg. In this scene, Ross is nervous as he is going

to be father. He had a dinner with his father and asked his father about the feeling that a father could have when knowing that he would have a baby soon. His father replies that Ross' mother did most of the parenting thing, he was busy with the business, but he adds that there is always time to make up for that, when he says: "Cause there's time to make up for that. We can do stuff together. You always wanted to go to that Colonial Williamsburg. How about we do that?" The Chinese subtitle has: "你一直想去威廉斯堡。我们去怎么样?" Here, the translator has used repetition as the strategy by giving a sound translation of the name Colonial Williamsburg. This translation is not really reliable. "堡" in Chinese means "castle", which can create confusion. Chinese viewers might think that Colonial Williamsburg is a castle, but in fact, Colonial Williamsburg is a place of heritage from the colonial period and located in Virginia. The translation is not effective. Chinese viewers do not know what Colonial Williamsburg is and where it is.

My suggested HPTE would be:

"你一直想去威廉斯堡（一个旅游胜地，离纽约很远）。我们去怎么样?" which translates as: "You always wanted to go to that Colonial Williamsburg (a famous place of interest far away from New York). How about we do that?" Creation was used as the strategy for this HPTE. As Chinese viewers are not familiar with Colonial Williamsburg, it is important to put some extra explanation. The suggested HPTE will also help Chinese viewers to understand that Colonial Williamsburg is not easily accessible for New Yorkers. This may help them understand why Mr Geller recommends this place. The extra explanation does not hamper the audience's enjoyment in watching the episode, because it is brief and synchronised with Mr Gellers' lines.

A slightly different type of cultural reference was found in the shape of a commonly used English idiom Season 4, Episode 13, Scene 4. In this scene, Joey and Monica have exchanged their apartments, but Joey comes back to take food away from the refrigerator from time to time. Monica is not happy with that. Monica: "umm, excuse me, we switched apartments. You cannot eat our food anymore, that gravy train had ended." The Chinese translation reads: "没有食物可以免费了。" Joey said: "Is there gravy?" Here, deletion is used as the strategy. The translator has deleted gravy train as a CSI and replaced it with "free food". It is reliable because gravy train right here means

free food. Even so, the translation is not effective, as, although Chinese viewers understand the line, the translator does not convey the association of gravy train. This will create confusion when Joey said “is there gravy”, as “gravy” does not have any precedent in the Chinese text.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

“肉汁（意指“免费食物”）不再是免费了。” which can be back translated as: “Gravy train (which means free food) has ended.” In other words, instead of using deletion, a combination of repetition and creation can be used as the translation strategy. “gravy train” will be retained and reproduced. This will enable Chinese viewers to understand why Joey then asked “Is there gravy?” However, it is also coupled with creation. The meaning of “gravy train” is provided, so Chinese viewers understand what gravy train means.

Season 5, Episode 14, Scene 3, In this scene, Joey, Rachel and Phoebe are all aware that Monica and Chandler are dating. However, they have not yet decided whether they should tell Monica and Chandler about this. Joey stated that he cannot keep too many secrets. Joey: “Oh yeah? Well, you don’t know about Hugsy, my bedtime penguin pal?”

The Chinese subtitle reads: “你不知道我睡觉时搂着企鹅哈根斯吧？” Repetition by means of sound translation is used as the strategy, because the translator has translated Hugsy directly. It is reliable although it is confusing. Chinese viewers might think that Joey sleeps with a penguin rather than a penguin toy. For this same reason, the translation is not effective. Chinese viewers do not know that penguin Hugsy is a toy. Without any more information obtained from the line, viewers are unlikely to know why it is unusual if Joey hugs Hugsy when sleeping.

Therefore my suggested HPTE would be:

“你不知道我睡觉时搂着玩具吧？” which can be translated as: “You don’t know that I like hugging a toy when sleeping?” In my view, deletion is the best strategy here. It is hard to describe Hugsy with one line or two, so it is impossible to use creation (i.e. extra explanation) in the subtitle. Deletion, but deleting the CSI and replacing it with “a toy” can solve this. Joey is an adult and hugging a toy when sleeping is a bit strange when you are an adult.

Season 8, Episode 2, Scene 6 contains a general reference to something which would

be immediately understood in American culture. In this scene, Monica, Phoebe and Rachel are speculating on the response of a man to the news that he will become a father. Rachel and Ross have a baby, but Rachel has not yet told Ross. They then asked Joey for opinions. Joey initial response to the question is that some woman who slept with him is pregnant.

Rachel: “ Joey, what would you do if someone you slept with told you she was pregnant? ”

Joey: “Who called here? Did she sound blond? Any accent? I gotta make a call. Should have never walked into that Sunglass Hut! ”

The Chinese subtitle reads: “早知就不走进太阳镜屋了。” Repetition is used as the strategy, because Sunglass Hut has been translated directly by its literal meaning. The Chinese equivalent of Sunglass is “太阳镜” and that of Hut is “屋”. In my view, this translation is confusing, since Sunglass Hut is not a famous brand in China. The audience might tend to think that 太阳镜屋 is a place filled with sunglasses or sun mirrors. Therefore, the Chinese audience will not understand what relationship Sunglass Hut has with the woman who slept with Joey.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

“早知我就不和太阳镜店的女孩搭讪了。” This can be back translated as: “Should have never flirted with the girl in the Sunglass Hut.” In my view, deletion is the best strategy. It is not necessary to emphasise that Sunglass Hut is a retail chain since this will still not help the Chinese audience understand what part Sunglass Hut plays in Joey’s personal life. Therefore, the subtitle would be more effective if it assists the audience in understanding that Joey flirted with a shop attendant in the Sunglass Hut and slept with her.

6.2.2 References to American movie or television series

References to American public characters often involved references to well-known movies or television series as well as references to the actors that starred in these. The first one of these discussed here concerns a reference to Lassie, the dog from the well-known television series that aired in the USA many decades ago.

In Season 3, Episode 21, Scene 5 , Monica is trying to talk to Phoebe at Central Perk,

but Phoebe is behaving like a dog, shaking her head and her ‘paws’, so that Monica tells her: “Okay, I feel like I am talking to Lassie.” Lassie was translated directly as “拉西”. The translator has used a combination of repetition and limited universalisation and rendered this as: “好了，我感觉自己和灵犬拉西在说话。” The reliability of this translation can be described as medium, as Lassie is an intelligent dog. Although the translator informs the audience that Lassie is an intelligent dog, the audience does not have any idea of why Lassie is mentioned here and how Lassie is different from other dogs. Reproducing Lassie here creates confusion and viewers can only speculate as to what Lassie means.

My recommendation for the HPTE (High probability Translation Equivalent) would be: “好了，我感觉自己象是和宠物狗聊天” (back translation: “Okay, I feel like I am talking to a pet dog.”) In my HPTE substitution is used rather than conservation. In addition, absolute universalisation is used, because the word “宠物狗” (pet dog) has a similar meaning in both cultures. This HPTE fits the context, in which two close friends communicate with each other. “dog” is not a choice, because it can be quite offensive to Chinese viewers. The HPTE “pet dog” may not convey the joke, but compared to the original translation, does not create confusion.

Another reference to American characters is found in Season 1, Episode 1, Scene 1, where Rachel compares Barry, her fiancé, to Mr Potato Head when she recounts how she ran away from a wedding and says: “...and then I got really freaked out, and that’s when it hits me: how much Barry looks like Mr. Potato Head.” The translator has translated this as: “我真的很害怕，巴瑞愈看愈象猪头先生。”

The strategy used by the subtitler here is absolute universalisation. The translator has translated “Mr. Potato Head” as “Mr. Pig” (猪头先生). The translator might have believed that Mr. Pig is a cultural item common to both American viewers and Chinese viewers, where Mr. Potato Head is not a cultural item in the Chinese culture. However, the reliability of this translation is low, as the translator has basically created a cultural item that is totally different from the original one. Mr. Potato Head does not resemble Mr. Pig in any aspect. Mr. Pig is created by the translator while Mr. Potato is a well-known toy in the US.

We could say that the translation is effective to some degree because Chinese viewers

know that Mr. Pig is derogatory. That's the only reason why a bride escaped the wedding. On the other hand, viewers might picture somebody who is described as "pig" as a chubby and short guy, but Barry is not fat. Meanwhile, because the translator put "Mr" in front of "Pig", Chinese viewers might think that "Mr Pig" is a cultural item in the US culture. In the Chinese culture, putting Mr. in front of a man's name is not usual. This is alien to Chinese viewers.

My own suggestion for the HPTE would be:

“巴瑞愈看愈象憨豆先生。” In this translation Barry is described as looking very similar to Mr. Bean. I would therefore recommend that in this case Limited universalisation is used as the strategy. It is basically impossible that Mr. Potato Head can be reproduced because it is unfamiliar to Chinese viewers. Mr. Bean is a cultural item that is familiar to Chinese viewers. In addition, Mr. Bean resembles Barry in many aspects. Putting it in the subtitle can easily amuse Chinese viewers, although Mr. Bean is different from Mr. Potato Head.

Season 1, Episode 1, Scene 7 contains a reference to a scene from American movie from the 1980s rather than to a specific character. In this scene, Monica has just spent the night with Paul and feels really attracted to him. When they say goodbye, Paul tries to describe the pleasant experience he had from last night by saying: "I am telling you last night was like umm, all my birthdays, both graduations, plus the barn raising scene in *Witness*." The subtitle reads: “不行，我要告诉你，昨天晚上就象我所有的生日，毕业典礼，谷仓收获季节加在一起一样。” The translator has used absolute universalisation as the strategy. However, the reference to the barn raising scene in *Witness* is a CSI that could be said to be comprehensible only to those in US culture who have seen that particular movie, and may be said to be difficult to understand for the general (younger) Chinese audience in this case. In choosing this translation the translator thus used a cultural item that is available in the Chinese culture as well, by choosing to use “谷仓收获季节” (barn harvest season). However, this translation is not reliable, in that raising a barn is different from harvesting crops and putting crops in a barn. In addition, it is not effective. Although Chinese viewers understand what a barn harvest season means, they will not understand what this has to do with birthdays and graduation ceremonies.

My own suggestion for the HPTE would be:

“不行，我要告诉你，昨天晚上就象我所有的生日，毕业典礼加在一起，还做了非常了不起的事。” which translates as: “No, I am telling you last night was like umm, all my birthdays, both graduations, plus doing the most amazing thing in my life.” To achieve this HPTE, deletion was used as a strategy, for two reasons. First of all, few Chinese viewers have watched the movie *Witness*, let alone understanding the importance of barn raising scene to the US audience. Second, they would not figure out why the barn raising scene is spoken of right here. Therefore, it would be better to delete it; otherwise, the translator might have to put additional explanations to help Chinese viewers understand it. The line “Doing the most amazing thing” is easier to understand, because Paul did want to emphasize that he did something amazing with Monica last night.

Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 22 contains another reference to an actress who used to star in a well-known American television soap series. In this scene, Monica met Young Ethan, a senior school student who told Monica that he was a senior university student. Monica only discovered Young Ethan’s age after having sex with him. Monica felt guilty and said: “I’m like those women that you see with shiny guys named Chad. I’m Joan Collins.” To which Young Ethan replies: “Who?” The Chinese subtitle reads: “我成了琼考琳丝” which translates as “I’m Joan Collins”. Here the translator has used repetition as the strategy by giving a direct sound translation of Joan Collins’ name. This translation is reliable, because the translator translated Joan Collins directly. However, it is not effective, as Chinese viewers are unlikely to know who Joan Collins is and will have no idea of why Monica compared herself to Joan Collins. For this reason, the audience might not understand why the US audience laughs when young Ethan asked “Who?”

My suggested HPTE would be:

“我成了琼考琳丝（75岁英国女影星，其丈夫小她32岁）” which would translate back as: “I’m Joan Collins. (a 75-year-old British movie star, who married a man 32 years her junior.)” In other words, creation is used as a strategy, because it is important to give Chinese viewers some extra information about Joan Collins since they will not be familiar with who she is. The HPTE will help Chinese viewers understand why

Monica thought that she is Joan Collins. It is also understandable why it is amusing when Young Ethan asked “why”. Young Ethan even does not know Joan Collins. It implies that Young Ethan is really young and knows movie stars different from those Monica knows.

Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 16 contains references to several well-known actors known from American movies. In this scene, Joey and Chandler meet Phoebe’s sister in a café, but cannot tell Phoebe apart from her sister. When they met Phoebe at the Central Perk, they started a conversation with Phoebe about Phoebe’s sister. Joey says to her: “Hey Phobes, guess who we saw today?” Phoebe guesses by asking if they saw Liam Neeson or Morly Safer? Here, once again, the translator has used repetition as the strategy by translating Liam Neeson and Morly Safer directly. The translation is reliable, but not effective. Chinese viewers do not know who Liam Neeson and Morly Safer are. Liam Neeson is a famous actor, whose most famous film is *Schindler’s List*. Morly Safer is a Canadian reporter and correspondent for CBS news. A lack of explanation in this scene might lead the Chinese viewers to suppose that Morly Safer and Liam Neeson are Phoebe’s friends.

My suggested for the HPTE would be:

“李安尼森（辛德勒名单的演员）

Liam Neeson (the actor in *Schindler’s List*)

墨利沙富尔（加拿大著名新闻广播员）

Morly Safer (a famous Canadian news reporter)”

To achieve this HPTE, creation was used as the strategy. As Chinese viewers are not familiar with either Liam Neeson or Morly Safer, it is important to put some extra explanation which will enable Chinese viewers to understand that Phoebe appears to mention some people that do not have any similarity. They will therefore understand Phoebe’s next guess is “The woman who cuts my hair.” This is consistent with Phoebe’s unpredictable nature in making statements. The extra explanation does not interfere with the audience’s enjoyment in watching the episode, because it is brief and synchronised with Phoebe’s lines.

Another reference to a well-known American movie character may be found in Season 2, Episode 14, Scene 7. In this scene, they are watching a videotape that filmed

Ross's life when he was a middle school before a prom. Ross resembled Mr. Kotter in his moustache and hairstyle, so Joey made joke of Ross when he watched it. Joey: "Hello, Mr. Kotter!" The subtitle reads: "好啊，卡特先生！" The translator used repetition as the strategy by employing a direct sound translation of the name Mr. Kotter. This is not effective, since the Chinese audience are not familiar with Mr. Kotter and hence will not understand why Joey addressed Ross as "Mr. Kotter". They do not understand the similarity between Mr Kotter and Ross.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

"好啊，大胡子先生！" which can be back translated as "Hello, Mr. Moustache!" another option would be to use: "好啊，卡特先生(一个留大胡子的电视剧角色)！" which translates as: "Hello, Mr. Kotter (a famous TV series character wearing thick moustache)!" Deletion was used as the strategy to achieve this HPTE. Chinese viewers may understand why Joey described Ross as Mr. Moustache. An alternative strategy would be creation, and would involve the translator adding some extra information to tell the audience what Mr. Kotter looks like.

Season 2, Episode 14, Scene 1 contains a reference to a popular American television soap opera. In this scene, Joey has just signed a contract with *Days of My Life*. With the money he earned, he bought a big screen TV set. They all compliment him on the TV set, especially its size. Ross says: "This screen is amazing, I mean Dick Van Dyke is practically life-size. The Chinese subtitle has: "狄凡戴看起来跟真人一样大"

Here, once again, the translator has used repetition as a strategy, by giving a sound translation of Dick Van Dyke. It is reliable, but not effective, since the Chinese audience is unlikely to know who Dick Van Dyke is and how tall he is. They will realise that Ross is exaggerating the size of the screen, because even the biggest television screen cannot show life size adults.

My own suggested HPTE would read:

"这个人看起来跟真人一样大" which translates back as: "I mean this person is practically life-size." Deletion has been used as a strategy, since Chinese viewers will not be familiar with Dick Van Dyke, but will understand that Ross was trying to suggest that the screen is big. In this situation, Dick Van Dyke does not have any value but simply creates confusion and distracts attention, hence it seems therefore reasonable to

delete this reference.

Season 2, Episode 16, Scene 4 another reference to an American movie. In this scene, Mr. Geller, Monica's father, is hosting a birthday party. Monica attends the party with her boyfriend, Richard. Richard is much older than Monica. They do not want to disclose their relationship to Mr. Geller, as Mr. Geller happens to be an old friend of Richard's. At the party, all men of Richard's age admire Richard as he has a young girlfriend. In the bathroom, Mr. Geller has a conversation with his wife about the change in Richard. Mrs. Geller: I have no idea. Did you know Richard has a twinkie in the city?

Mr.Geller: "I know. He's like a new man. It's like a scene from *Cocoon*." 他象个全新的男人, 就好象进了“魔茧”一样。(He is like a new man. He seems as if he has entered a magic cocoon.) Here the translator used repetition as the strategy, by translating *Cocoon* directly. It is reliable, because the translator translated Dick Van Dyke directly, but it is not effective, as Few Chinese viewers will have watched *Cocoon*. *Cocoon* is a movie in which a group of elderly people are rejuvenated by aliens.

My suggested HPTE would be:

“他象个全新的男人, 重新焕发青春的活力” which can be translated as: “He's like a new man. He has been rejuvenated.” Deletion was used as the strategy to achieve this HPTE. Since most of the Chinese audience will not be familiar with the movie *Cocoon*, there is not much point in retaining its title. As the original sentence intends to suggest that Richard has a new look, the translator can concentrate on simply conveying the message that is conveyed by Mr. Geller, i.e. that Richard seems rejuvenated.

Season 3, Episode 8, Scene 4 contains another reference to a character from an American movie. In this scene, Joey has someone who loves his TV opera and stalks him. Joey was anxious at the beginning but finally aware that the stalker is a pretty girl. Rachel and Monica asked Chandler about what is the stalker like. Chandler uses a character from the movie *Misery* for comparison. Monica says that she can't believe Joey's having lunch with his stalker and asks what she is like. To which Chandler replies: “Well, you remember *Cathy Bates in Misery?*” 你还记得颤栗游戏里的凯西贝兹?

Rachel and Monica: “Yeah.”

Chandler: “Well, she looks the exact opposite of that. ”

The translator has used repetition as the translation strategy, by giving a sound translation of both *Cathy Bates* and *Misery*. However, this is not effective, since few Chinese viewers will have watched the movie *Misery* and therefore cannot picture what *Cathy Bates* is like.

My suggested HPTE would be:

“你还记得电影《颤栗游戏》里的那个胖胖的中年妇女吗？” which would translate back as: “Well, you remember the overweight mid-aged woman in the movie *Misery*?” The strategy used to achieve this HPTE involves a combination of deletion and repetition. Repetition is used when the movie is translated, however the word “movie” has been added to “*Misery*” so the audience will understand that “*Misery*” is a movie, in spite of not being familiar with it. Since most of the Chinese audience do not know what *Cathy Bates* is like, deletion is used as the strategy, however the essence has been retained by adding the description of *Cathy Bates*, as an overweight mid-aged woman, and this enables Chinese viewers to understand Chandler’s statement.

A similar reference is found in Season 2, Episode 13, Scene 4. In this scene, the friends are at the movie set and talking to actors and actresses. Susie, a makeup assistant, is commenting on problems with doing the makeup of the main actress.

Susie: “We’ve got a problem”.

Director’s assistant: “Tell me.”

Susie: “I cannot do Chris’s makeup. She refuses to acknowledge that she has a moustache.”

Director’s assistant: “Is it bad? ”

Susie: “It looks like one of her eyebrows fell down. Now unless someone convinces her to let me bleach it, Jean-Claude Vandamme is gonna be making out with Gabe Kaplan.”

Here the translator is using repetition as the strategy by using a direct sound translation for the names of Jean-Claude Vandamme (the main actor in the movie) and Gabe Kaplan. The subtitle is reliable, but confusing, since Jean-Claude Vandamme and Gabe Kaplan are not familiar to a Chinese audience. This translation is not effective, since Chinese viewers would not even know whether Gabe Kaplan and Jean-Claude

Vandamme are men or women.

My suggested HPTE would be:

“男主角就要和一个有胡须的女人亲热了” which can be translated back as: “The main actor is gonna be making out with a moustache woman.” To achieve this HPTE, the strategy of absolute universalisation was used. In whatever culture in the world, a man would not go out with a moustachioed woman and it is not usual to see a woman with a moustache. Using “a moustache woman” as an alternative to Gabe Kaplan (a man who is famous for his moustache) can help the Chinese audience understand the joke and also links in with previous lines.

6.2.3 References to American institutions

The term ‘institutions’ has been used loosely to include personalities (e.g. Dick van Dyke), shops (e.g. Sunglass Hut) or food (e.g. well-known American ice cream flavours). What follows will be a selection of scenes containing such references and an discussion of the translation strategies followed by the translators.

The first scene discussed here contains a reference to the American institution of softball, as well as a reference to Bugs Bunny, a well-known cartoon character. In Season 1, Episode 3, Scene 4, Ross, Rachel, Chandler and Joey have just finished a softball game with Allan, Monica’s boyfriend. Monica asked them for their opinion about Allan. Apparently, they all think highly of Allan. Ross says: “He was unbelievable. He was like that that that Bugs Bunny cartoon where Bugs is playing all the positions, right, but instead of Bugs it was first base-Alan, second base-Alan, third base-.... The Chinese subtitle reads: “他就象兔宝宝卡通里的兔宝宝守每个位置, 虽然我们没有兔宝宝, 但是我们有一垒手亚伦, 二垒手亚伦, 三垒手亚伦...” Here, the translator used repetition as the translation strategy. There are two CSIs, Bugs Bunny and softball, however neither of them is familiar to Chinese viewers. The subtitle is not effective, since Chinese viewers are likely to have no idea about the cartoon character. American viewers will associate Bugs Bunny with someone who is active, dynamic and all-round, but Chinese viewers do not have such an association. Neither will they understand softball, including the distance between first base, second base and third base and whether it is important or not for a person to be on different bases.

My own suggested translation for the HPTE would be:

“他就象个灵活的兔子无处不在，他在这里，那里，这里，那里” which could be translated as: “He is everywhere like an astute rabbit. He is here, there, everywhere.” Here, deletion can be used as an alternative strategy. Since it is basically impossible for the translator to impart the knowledge of Bugs Bunny to the audience, it is better to delete it. Meanwhile, as Chinese viewers are not sure why a person should be at one base, second base and third base, it is better to delete these phrases as well. The translation “Here, there, here, everywhere” is used to match the impression of Ross in the scene and is understandable because, whatever the sport, it is good to have somebody who covers all positions.

Another reference to American institutions is found in Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 3 – where a reference is made to FICA. In this scene, Rachel runs up with an envelope in her hands, containing her first pay cheque. She opens it and finds that the pay is not as much as she expected. Rachel says: “Who is FICA? Why’s he getting all my money? The original translation reads as: “谁是 FICA? 为什么他拿走我所有的钱?” In choosing this translation, the translator has used repetition as the translation strategy, without explaining what the letters FICA stand for. In my view, this translation is not effective, and will leave Chinese viewers puzzled. Chinese viewers will hear a lot of laughter in the background, but the audience would have no idea of what is so funny. FICA stands for Federal Insurance Contribution Act, which requires all working people to pay part of their income as insurance and social security.

My suggestion for the HPTE would be:

“谁是 FICA (FICA 是一个美国法案，硬性扣取员工收入作为社保金)” which translates back as: “Who is FICA (FICA is a US act that requires employees to contribute part of income as premiums.” To achieve this HPTE, creation is used as the strategy. By adding a reference that explains what FICA stands for, the translator can help the audience understand why the US audience was laughing when Rachel asked the question: “who is FICA.” It is synchronised with Rachel’s statement and there is sufficient space on screen to put the explanation.

Yet another reference to American ‘institutions’ occurs in Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 6. In this scene, Ross is citing some examples to describe Monica’s obsession with

keeping everything tidy and organized, by saying: “Oh, C’ mon! when we were kids, yours was the only Raggedy Ann doll that wasn’t raggedy!” The subtitle reads: “拜托，我们小时候你的“破娃娃”是唯一不破的！” Here the translator has used limited universalisation as the strategy. As Raggedy Ann dolls do not exist in the target culture, the translator has used “ragged doll” as an alternative, assuming that “ragged doll” is a CSI that can be comprehended by Chinese viewers. We can say that this translation is not effective. Chinese viewers are puzzled. They might perceive “ragged doll” as “worn doll” or “broken doll”. They do not understand why Americans have toys such as ragged dolls. When dolls are ragged, they can be disposed of.

My own suggested translation for the HPTE would be:

“我们小时候你的“布娃娃”总是穿得整整齐齐的！” which can be translated as: “When we were kids, your doll was always well dressed!” To achieve this HPTE, absolute universalisation was used as an alternative. Dolls are common to both American and Chinese culture, making this a CSI that is available in both cultures. How a child looks after a doll reveals the child’s personality. In general, a child is not an adult and does not have a strong sense of responsibility as an adult does. Therefore, a child’s doll is not likely to be well dressed up. However, if Monica’s doll is well dressed up, it clearly tells us that Monica is obsessed with keeping things organised and tidy. Her behaviour is exceptional for a child. Chinese viewers will understand why Ross uses this association to describe Monica’s overly organised and overtly odd behaviour.

Another reference to American institutions is found in Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 10: In this scene, they are sitting at the Central Perk talking about how to spend New Year’s Eve. Chandler says: “It’s just that I’m sick of being a victim of this Dick Clark holiday. I say this year, no dates we make a pact. Just the six of us-dinner. The subtitle reads: “新年时，我不想再听到迪克拉克。” which can be translated as: “This year, I don’t want to hear Dick Clark!”. Here, the translator has used repetition as the strategy, by just translating Dick Clark directly without making any effort to explain who he is and help the audience understand why Dick Clark is mentioned here. This translation is not effective, as Chinese viewers do not know who Dick Clark is. “Sick of Dick Clark” might make viewers think that Dick Clark is somebody Chandler met in previous New Year Eves and got sick of meeting him again.

My suggested HPTE would be:

“我不会自己坐在家，看着电视上的人大声喊倒数。” which can be translated as: “I would not sit at home watching people on TV count down aloud.” In my translation approach, limited universalisation is used as an alternative. Chinese viewers do not know who Dick Clark is, but they do know that American people have a tradition of counting down at Time Square. Therefore, they will surely understand Chandler’s frustration if he stays home alone and cannot join the cheering crowd. It also respects the original line, because Dick Clark is the man who is reporting countdown every year in New York.

Season 1, Episode 4, Scene 12 also contains a reference to an American institution in the form of well-known novelist Danielle Steel. In this scene, Monica, Phoebe and Rachel are talking about Polo, Rachel’s Italian boyfriend. It seems that Rachel is really in love with her boyfriend, when she says: Rachel: I mean, we are way past the fling thing, I mean, I am feeling things that I’ve only read about in Danielle Steel’s books, you know? The Chinese subtitle reads: “我想，我们已经远远超出玩的范围了，我现在的感觉只有在 Danielle Steel的书里才会找到。” Here, the translator has used repetition as the strategy, by translating the name *Danielle Steel* directly. It is not effective. Danielle Steel is nameless in China. Few Chinese readers have the knowledge that Danielle Steel wrote many popular fiction novels about love, especially how people display love when their relationship is under threat. It is impossible to explain this to the audience with a single line, but repetition is not the most appropriate strategy to help the audience understand the scene.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

“我想，我们已经远远超出玩的范围了，我现在的感觉只有在最棒的爱情故事里才能找到，你知道吗？” which can be back translated as: “I mean, we are way past the fling thing, I mean, I am feeling things that I’ve only read in the best books about love, you know?” to achieve this HPTE, deletion was used as the strategy. It is impossible to inform the audience of who Danielle Steel is and what books she wrote. In other words, repeating her name will not evoke the same association in the Chinese audience as it did in the US audience. Viewers would only understand Rachel’s feelings after reading some books written by Danielle Steel. For this reason, the best strategy is to delete the

CSI and use a general term “the best books about love” as this will help the Chinese audience understand the scene.

Season 3, Episode 12, Scene 11 contains another reference to an American institution, when Monica refers to People magazine. In this scene, Monica is in love with a waiter in the restaurant where she is working. The waiter is a poet, showing poems he has written to Monica. In one poem, however, he is apparently describing Monica as an empty vase. Monica is unhappy with this description, saying: “You know, so I don’t read as many important books as you do, and I don’t write trick poems that seem to be about one thing but are actually about something else. And you know what, I get excited about stupid stuff, like when I my People magazine comes on Saturday, and the new Hold Everything catalog. You know but that does not mean that I’m empty, I care about things. I care about my friends and family. You have no right to make that kind of judgment about me.” The underlined part appears in the subtitle translation as: “就象我的时人杂志来的时候，还有“抓住一切”的商品目录来的时候” which can be translated as “When my fashion persons magazine comes, and with “catch-all” commodity catalogue..” Here the translator has once again used repetition as the strategy, by giving a sound translation of both CSIs: People magazine and Hold Everything catalog. This is not effective, since Chinese viewers barely know what People magazine is concerned with and what information the Hold Everything catalogue provides. With this limited knowledge a Chinese audience is unlikely to know why Monica cited these two names to suggest that she gets excited about stupid stuff but is not empty.

My own suggested HPTE would be:

“就象我看到明星杂志的时候，还有看到购物指南的时候...”， which can be translated back as: “When I see the magazine about stars and the Shopping Catalogue.” Here I have used absolute universalisation rather than repetition as the translation strategy. Magazines about movie stars or celebrities are normally about these celebrities’ personal lives. Shopping Catalogue are normally designed for those people who like grocery shopping, such as housewives. Such magazines and shopping catalogues exist in China as well, so the audience will understand that these are in contrast to “more serious reading material such as *Time*, *National Geography* and *Newsweek* and will

understand why Monica mentioned these.

In Season 3, Episode 15, Scene 5 we find another reference to an American institution. In this scene, Monica and Phoebe are having dinner with two Frenchmen. Monica wants to show off the French she learns elsewhere, but it turns out to be something embarrassing when she is told that she in fact just asked if one of them wanted to go to bed with her tonight. Monica replies: “Oh, my god! No wonder I get such great service at Café Maurice.” The Chinese subtitle reads: “难怪我在莫立斯餐厅得到那么好的服务。” Here, repetition is used as a strategy and Café Maurice is translated directly. The translation can be said to be reliable because the translator provided the name of the restaurant, however it is not effective, as Chinese viewers do not know where Cafe Maurice is and what service it is providing. Chinese viewers are puzzled about why Monica receives the best service at Cafe Maurice because she says a French sentence “If I wanted to go to bed with you tonight”.

My own suggested HPTE would be :

“难怪我在莫立斯餐厅（纽约的一间著名法国饭店）得到那么好的服务。” “No wonder I get such great service at Café Maurice (a famous French restaurant in New York).” In this HPTE, creation, rather than repetition, is used as the translation strategy. Extra information is provided about the restaurant, so Chinese viewers will understand why Monica receives good service after saying that French sentence.

Season 3, Episode 19, Scene 10 contains a reference to a commonly used idiom in the English language. In this scene, Joey is unhappy because the actress he is working with in the play looks down on him primarily because Joey is not a famous actor and does not have college qualifications. Joey says: “Just because she went to Yale drama, she thinks she’s like the greatest actress since, since, sliced bread! In the subtitle this appears as: “她在耶鲁念戏剧，就自以为是切片面包机发明以来最好的演员。” Repetition is used as the strategy, since the translator has translated sliced bread directly. This is reliable because Joey did mention “sliced bread”, but not effective, since the Chinese viewers are unlikely to understand why Joey used sliced bread right here.

My suggested HPTE would be:

“她在耶鲁念戏剧，就自以为是史上最好的演员” which can be translated back as: “Just because she went to Yale drama, she thinks she’s like the greatest actress in

history.” Here absolute universalisation rather than repetition was used as the translation strategy. Deleting sliced bread and replacing it with “history” will help the audience understand what Joey intended to say.

Season 2, Episode 14, Scene 3 contains a reference to a well-known American character, mime artist Marcel Marceau, who became something of an institution in American culture. In this scene, Chandler is moaning about the bracelet given to him by Joey. Chandler thinks that the bracelet makes him repellent to women. While Chandler is talking, Joey comes along and overhears him. Chandler tried to cover up his attitude after realizing that Joey is present. He says: “We were just doing some impressions over here. Do your Marcel Marceau.”

The Chinese subtitle reads: “兄弟，我们正在玩...名人模仿秀。表演你的马歇马修。” The translator has used repetition as the strategy once more, by giving a sound translation of Marcel Marceau’s name. It is reliable, but not effective, as Chinese viewers are probably not familiar with Marcel Marceau. They might even think that Marcel Marceau is a character in a famous play or a celebrity that is always imitated by other people.

Therefore my suggested HPTE would be:

“兄弟，我们正在玩...名人模仿秀。你要加入吗？” which translates back as: “We were just doing some impressions over here. Would you join us?” In this HPTE deletion was used as the strategy, in view of the fact that it is hard for Chinese viewers to understand why Chandler mentioned Marcel Marceau here. Even if putting some extra information (using creation as the strategy) might help them know that Marcel Marceau is a famous French mime artist, they would not understand why Chandler mentioned this artist here. This would require Chinese viewers to have profound knowledge of the US culture before they can understand this pun. Therefore, deletion is the best strategy here.

6.3 Summary of translation strategies used

Regardless of the type of cultural reference, translators generally opted to use repetition as a translation strategy. Translators generally did this either by means of a literal translation or, in the case of names of people and places, by means of a sound

translation. This may be because repetition is the easiest way of translating a CSI. The translators did not have to speculate on whether the subtitle could be understood or not by the audience. The translators may have been mainly concerned with the criterion of “reliability”, which may explain why the translators appeared to focus on the literal meanings of CSIs or simply chose sound translation in some cases. Unfortunately the researcher can only speculate as to the translators’ rationale for choosing repetition as their main strategy. One could speculate that translators opted for literal sound translations or repetition to avoid being accused of not having respected the original text, but unfortunately, the strategy of translation appears to have “ignored” the audience’s possible understanding of the subtitle. One could therefore say that in doing so, in a manner of speaking translators placed their own self-interest (protection of their reputation) above the needs and interests of the audience. In addition, there is the interesting question of whether the translators themselves in fact understood the associated meanings of the CSIs in question, especially where these referred to films and television series which date back to the 1980s, an era when Mainland China had not “opened up” to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, this question is beyond the scope of the current study, leaving an interesting topic of investigation for future studies.

Figure 6.1 refers to 6.3 summary of translation strategies used. And Figure 6.2 refers to 6.3.1 summary of strategies used to achieve suggested HPTES.

6.3.1 Summary of strategies used to achieve suggested HPTES

In most cases, the suggested HPTES involved the use of strategies such as creation and deletion. There are two main reasons why the researcher frequently opted to use these two strategies. First, it was often not possible to find a dynamic equivalent (i.e., the equivalent that aims to ensure the target readers can respond the same way as the source readers) of a CSI in question in the Chinese language. Second, the researcher often felt that deletion of the CSI or creating a word or phrase that conveyed the same message as that intended by the characters would help the audience understand the scene. Finally, it should be added that the investigation of CSIs was an area of interest for the researcher and that she took the time to find out the underlying meaning associated with the CSIs in question. In addition, she had time available to test out what

would work best in the given sentence, and why. The anonymous translators of *Friends* may not have had this luxury of having time to spend on pondering the best way to translate such associated meanings, assuming they were aware of the latter.

Figure 6.1 below shows the frequency of approaches use by the translator.

The pie chart shows that repetition is the most preferable strategy for translators, as in 82% of the cases where the translator uses an inappropriate strategy, repetition is chosen. This is in sharp contrast to 4% of the cases where deletion is selected as the strategy. This might be explained by the fact that the translator is more comfortable with reproducing a CSI (believing that it is his/her responsibility to translate everything that appears in the source text) than with deleting it. Absolute universalisation and limited universalisation combined constitute 14% of the cases, suggesting that the translator from time to time realises the possibility that the intended audience has problems in understanding CSIs and then manage to find a dynamic equivalent in the target culture.

Figure 6.1

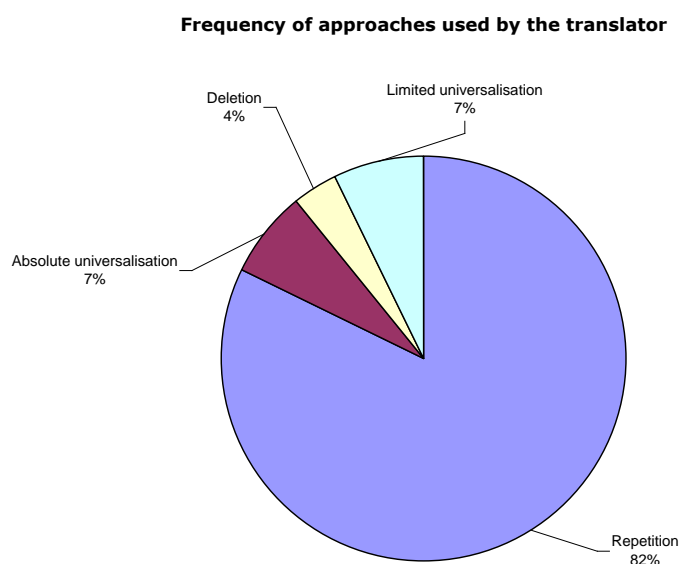
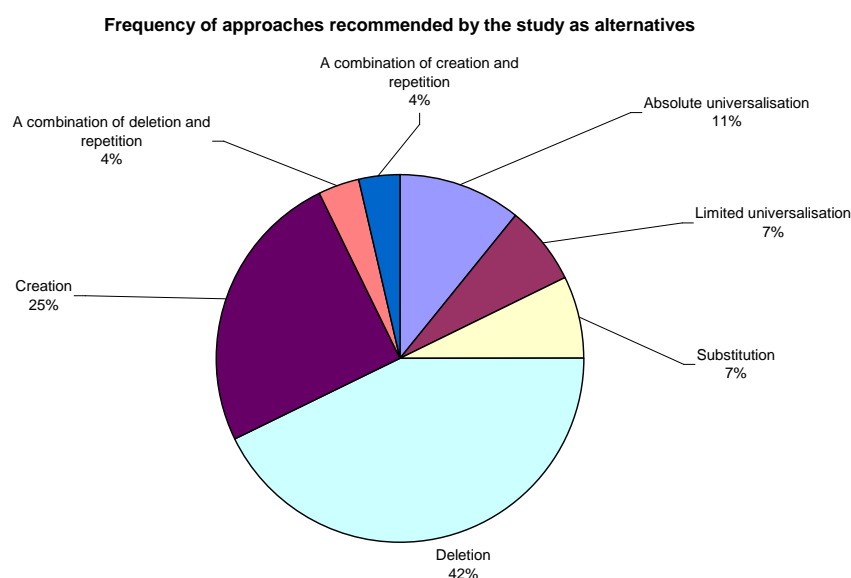


Figure 6.2 The table below shows the frequency of approaches recommended by the study as alternatives.

As shown in the figure 6.2, it is interesting to find that repetition has been fully deserted as a translation strategy to achieve expected outcomes of translating CSIs. Alternatively, deletion is the most commonly used strategy (used in 42% of the scenes selected by the present study), followed by creation (used in 25% of the scenes). On the other hand, other strategies, such as substitution, absolute universalisation and limited universalisation, are also used to varying degrees. In some cases, two strategies should be combined. For example, in 4% of the scenes, deletion and repetition are used simultaneously. In short, a greater variety of strategies have been used as opposed to a small number of strategies used by translators. This indicates that in order to achieve preferred outcomes, it is important to analyse the contextual factors and the specific traits of CSIs closely and then choose strategies accordingly. It is not rational to count on some strategies only.

Figure 6.2



The summary of the circumstances in which one strategy is used rather than the other is difficult, as it is normally determined by a number of factors, such as the context, the scene, the CSIs involved, the syntax of the sentence and so forth. A general comment on

these circumstances is shown as follows:

Circumstances	Strategies used
CSIs involved are absent in the culture of the target audience	Repetition is replaced by deletion
CSIs involved are absent in the culture of the target audience but a practical equivalent (a CSI available in both cultures) can be found	Repetition is replaced by universalisation

6.4 Summary of chapter

This chapter has presented a discussion of the use of strategies used by the subtitle translators to deal with CSIs in *Friends*. Scenes containing a selection of CSIs taken from *Friends* were presented and their background described. Original subtitles were transcribed and presented, mostly with a back translation into English. Where the subtitle contained a sound translation of particular names, this was indicated in the discussion. This was followed by a discussion of the subtitle translation and the strategies chosen by the subtitle translators to achieve these translations. The discussion clearly shows that subtitlers appeared to favour the strategy of repetition in handling CSIs. While repetition allows the translators to preserve the CSIs of the source text, it was clear from the discussion that it could be said that repetition failed to help the audience understand these CSIs in most cases.

The HPTEs presented by the researcher aimed to achieve four standards described in the literature on screen translation (e.g. Ivarsson, 1998) including reliability, synchronisation, efficacy and brevity. It would appear from these HPTEs that creation and deletion are two strategies that may be useful in the translation of handling CSIs and that may better serve the needs of the audience. A tentative explanation for this might be that many CSIs in the US culture do not have practical equivalents in the Chinese language and culture, hence mere repetition or reproduction of these CSIs does not assist the audience to understand the scenes.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Review of the original aim of the study

The original aim of the study was to analyse the strategies used by translators when dealing with CSIs in US-produced TV series. The television series chosen was *Friends*, a US-made TV series that shows the life of six young, white adults living in New York. *Friends* was chosen primarily because it used the daily life of young Americans as its basic material. *Friends* seemed a good choice for a research study of this nature, firstly because of its popularity in Mainland China and secondly because it contains many scenes involving different types of Culture Specific Items (CSIs). *Friends* enjoys enormous popularity with young Chinese audiences, who watch it on TV or on the Internet. Many Chinese websites are recommending *Friends* as effective material for English language study, not only because its lines show the daily discourse of American people but also because it is thought to provide some insight into American culture. The fact that *Friends* is a sitcom and as such not to be taken too seriously is probably lost on a majority of viewers in Mainland China.

A secondary aim of the study was to analyse any scenes involving politeness. In other words, the researcher was interested to see whether the translators had made any attempt to achieve a cross-cultural translation in terms of Nida's (1969) 'dynamic equivalence' or whether they had adhered to the original discourse and basically left it in place. Hofstede's (2001) four cultural dimensions (uncertainty avoidance, individualism as opposed to collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and power distance) and high context and low context were used to measure such differences. The study included ten scenes which met these criteria and which were analysed for this purpose.

7.2 Review of methodological approach

Choosing scenes from *Friends* for the data analysis proved a good decision, since the script involved a considerable number of CSIs. Hence it was easy to find Culture Specific Items that might prove a challenge to translators in that it would require them to choose appropriate subtitling strategies. Strategies such as deletion and creation were found more effective than strategies such as repetition of CSIs. This is consistent with

Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence, which can help achieve the same response in intended viewers as the response in viewers from the source culture (Nida, 1969). The use of these strategies is also consistent with the ideology advocated by Baker (2003), who believes that pragmatic translation can be used in translation. By using approaches such as creation (by adding new information) and omission (removing CSIs), Baker (2003) argues that this can help viewers to understand the source text.

The TV series includes a wide range of real life contexts, from the office or workplace to the home environment, however Chinese viewers probably did not realize they were watching a sitcom. In other words, they may have taken everything seriously, instead of realising that the rules of politeness are being intentionally broken by playwright to get a laugh out of the audience. Translators should eliminate the effect of cultural alienation and make the scenes more comprehensible.

Central to the methodology chosen for this dissertation was the analysis of the strategies used by translators in dealing with CSIs in *Friends*. These strategies were analysed based on the literature review of translation approaches recommended by Ivarsson (1998), Aixelá (1996) for the translation of subtitles and CSIs respectively. This resulted in a method of analysis which helped to identify the strategies most favoured by translators. However, one of the weaknesses of this methodology is that the researcher might focus on the subtitles involving CSIs in which the strategies used were inappropriate, when in fact this does not mean that such strategies are inherently inappropriate. For example, in the analysis, repetition was found to be ineffective in many cases, but this does not take away from the fact that it might still be useful on other occasions.

Another possible limitation of the methodological approach was that it did not investigate why translators had made particular choices, for instance by means of a questionnaire completed by the subtitle translators in question. The main reason why the study did not solicit opinions from any third parties about the strategies have been used was that the researcher found that the method of analysis used made identifying the translation strategies used relatively unproblematic. An added problem was that the names of the translators do not appear on screen when *Friends* is viewed outline, hence contacting the translators to elicit their views on translation strategies might prove

problematic.

7.3 Findings in the framework of previous studies

The literature review included studies which suggest that there are a number of cross-cultural differences between American culture and Mainland Chinese culture, e.g. in terms of “face” (Zhu, et al, 2007; Edward, 2005), power distance, uncertainty avoidance and individualism (Hofstede, 1973). Obviously *Friends* is a sitcom, in which the rules of politeness are intentionally broken in order to shock the audience and make them laugh out of disbelief that anyone could behave so impolitely. In view of the fact that most Chinese viewers are likely to take the scenes in *Friends* at face value and will not understand some behaviours shown in the TV opera, subtitle producers should still be aware of this possibility and make subtitles more comprehensible to Chinese viewers.

The main aim of the study, obviously, was to analyse the strategies used to arrive at the subtitle translations and whether these were effective in terms of dynamic equivalence. My analyses did include some assumptions as to how the Chinese audience might have responded to perceived cross-cultural differences in terms of politeness issues. Obviously, my comments were subjective to some extent, and the study did not include a mock audience to confirm whether my assumptions were shared by a wider audience. The fact that *Friends* is a sitcom, where exaggerated social behaviour was used to elicit a laugh from the American audience also means that the data could not totally be relied upon to present a true picture of such cross-cultural differences.

The analysis of subtitle translations drew both on subtitle criteria outlined by Ivarsson (1998) and on translation strategies classified by Aixelá (1996). Both proved very beneficial to the analysis and assisted the researcher in identifying a number of weaknesses in relation to commonly used subtitle translation strategies and presented an account of why these strategies failed to meet some performance criteria. The researcher complemented the analysis by recommending some strategies that could be used as alternatives to achieve better understanding by members of the target audience.

The analysis of the 30 scenes selected from *Friends* appeared to indicate that repetition was the strategy that is most likely to achieve less than satisfactory outcomes

in terms of what Nida (1969) describes as ‘dynamic equivalence’. In relation to the four performance criteria outlined by Ivarsson & Carroll (1998) and Loeb (2009): brevity, synchronisation, reliability and efficacy, the CSI translation strategy of repetition (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998) very often failed to meet the criteria of reliability and efficacy. Although repetition enabled translators to show loyalty to the original text, the reproduction of an equivalent in the target culture (i.e., Chinese culture) proved problematic. The Chinese audience would have found it difficult to understand the CSIs, mainly because some American CSIs (such as movie stars) are not known in Chinese culture.

Substitution, creation and deletion were recommended by the researcher as alternatives to repetition. These strategies take into account how the audience from the target culture might understand the subtitle – in other words, they are more focused on the Target Text audience. By either deleting the CSIs whose equivalent in the target culture could not be located easily or by finding a CSI in the target culture that might assist the audience to understand the line easily, the translator was able to successfully tackle CSIs. We could say that such suggested translation strategies were of help in bridging a possible cultural divide between the USA and China.

7.4 Review of discussion

A review of the selected CSIs from *Friends* together with their translations appeared to suggest that translators of these CSIs were in favour of the strategy of repetition in translating CSIs. This might be justified by the convenience brought about by translators simply reproducing CSIs verbatim. It is possible that in doing so, translators either consciously or subconsciously put less emphasis on the audience’s comprehension of CSIs. They might simply have been concerned with whether the CSIs had been translated and the original text had been preserved. The researcher did not include a questionnaire targeted at identifying subtitle translators’ rationales for choosing particular translation strategies, and this may be an area future studies can look at.

The discussion appeared to suggest that a better alternative to the strategy of repetition in dealing with CSIs would be creation or deletion. This might be explained

by the fact that some CSIs do not have dynamic equivalents (Nida, 1969) in the Chinese language and the reproduction of these CSIs might pose a barrier to the audience's understanding of the subtitles. In order to help the audience understand the lines without difficulties, CSIs can be eliminated from time to time. As distinct from the strategy of repetition, the strategy of creation or deletion may be said to put the audience's understanding of the text as the priority and hence may be said to be Target Audience centred.

7.5 Significance of the study

One important contribution of the research to the existing literature could be said to be the fact that it attempted to look at cross-cultural differences in the way politeness is handled in subtitle translation as a side issue. This was somewhat successful, but was somewhat hampered by the fact that *Friends* is a sitcom where characters may sometimes be seen to behave in a manner that is perceived to be outrageous by the American audience in order to create humorous situation and to raise a laugh. Future studies may wish to use other types of television series such as news interviews or documentaries for this purpose. This study also added a new dimension to cross-cultural translation studies in weaving Hofstede's four cultural benchmarks (1973) into the subtitle analysis. The study showed that television series can in principle provide valuable data for the analysis of how cross-cultural differences are handled by subtitle translators.

Another contribution of the research is that it has presented new insights into whether particular translation strategies in fact offer satisfactory outcomes when the subtitle in question involves CSIs. The study showed that some subtitle translation strategies (e.g. repetition) did not prove as effective in achieving dynamic equivalence as other strategies such as creation or deletion. Up until the present, many academic studies in this field have basically outlined a number of strategies that can be used by subtitle producers, without attempting to identify which strategies can be more useful than others in dealing with CSIs.

7.6 Limitations of the research and implications for future study

One limitation of the research is that it did not involve inter-rater agreement. This was based on the fact that translation criticism is a specialized activity and that most potential assessors simply do not possess the expertise to engage in translation criticism. For this reason, it is rare to find studies of this nature where the researchers have presented assessments of translation work other than their own. As an example, a general Chinese viewer might overlook the subtitles that cause confusion or subtitles that cause confusion might not present insurmountable barriers to watching this TV series. In other words, although some subtitle translation strategies (such as repetition) might be found to be less than satisfactory in dealing with some CSIs in the research study, they might not hinder the audience from understanding the scene or episode overall or Chinese viewers might not be as concerned about the effectiveness of translation as translation researchers are. However, future researchers in this field might include a survey asking a small sample of specialised and experienced Chinese translation assessors to state how they understood certain CSIs.

Another limitation of the research is that it did not consider the effect of cultural convergence on Chinese viewers. It is possible that Chinese viewers today are now more familiar with the US culture than any Chinese audience before them in the past. Future research might consider the influence of translation on cultural convergence among Chinese viewers as such an issue should not be ignored in a globalised world.

7.7 Concluding remarks

“The only constant is change”. There is not a one-size-fit-all approach in the world for dealing with any issue, and subtitling is no exception to this maxim. The findings of the research appear to suggest that repetition as a translation strategy for dealing with CSIs, although frequently adopted by the translators whose work was analysed here does not always lead to the most effective translation equivalents. Employing a variety of strategies and selecting these according to which one works best in the circumstances may be the best approach. Therefore, one could say that the only constant in dealing with CSIs is change, namely, changing translation strategies according to the situation.

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