

## Ideology Manipulation of the Chinese-English Subtitled “Main Melody” Films: A Case Study of *Wolf Warrior II* and *The Wandering Earth*

Ying Xie\*

Department of Media and Communication, Swinburne University of Technology, John Street, Hawthorn VIC 3122, Australia

Corresponding Author: Ying Xie, E-mail: yxie@swin.edu.au

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received: December 08, 2020

Accepted: February 03, 2021

Published: March 31, 2021

Volume: 10 Issue: 2

Advance access: March 2021

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

### ABSTRACT

Films are the reflection of the mainstream ideology in a specific culture. More importantly, the process of film translation itself is equivalent to the rewriting process by the translator (Lefevere 1992), which embodies and even strengthens the manipulation of social ideology. As the “Main Melody” films that focus on propagandizing the official messages of the Communist Party of China (CPC), *Wolf Warrior II* (2017) and *The Wandering Earth* (2019)’s rewritten subtitles intensively embody the ideology manipulation under the regime of the CPC and the Chinese government. By discussing how audiences from different social, cultural, ethnic backgrounds might employ their experience and knowledge about the Chinese society and politics to decode the subtitles in ways that contradict the intended meaning, this paper seeks to investigate the effectiveness of the rewritten subtitles’ ideological manipulation towards the Chinese audience and the English-speaking audience.

**Key words:** Audiovisual Translation, Ideology Manipulation, “Main Melody” Film, Rewriting, Social-political Environment, Subtitle Translation

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rewritten Subtitles of Audiovisual Products as the Embodiment of Ideology Manipulation

As we have seen through the influence of Hollywood films, audiovisual products that are widely disseminated can boast great influence around the world. In today’s “era of digital and audiovisual communication” (Díaz Cintas 2012: 280), audiovisual products permeate everyone’s daily life as well as work via various platforms like television, smartphone, internet, etc. In the process of external dissemination, these audiovisual products not only entertains the target audience during viewing, they also affect the target audience through the views and attitudes promoted or implied in the program. At the same time, the translation of the audiovisual product’s source language into the target language is an indispensable step to realize its influence of attitude and viewpoint on the target audience. As the “assumptions, moral values, commonplaces, and stereotypes” (Díaz Cintas 2012: 281) embedded in audiovisual products may be capable of penetrating the target audiences’ culture, the ideology of the source language country can then be transmitted and so has the potential to infiltrate other cultures with subtlety.

Ideology refers to “systems of thought”, “systems of belief”, or “symbolic systems” that are highly correlated to social activities or political practice (Thompson 2013: 6). Formed in a certain social-political and cultural background,

ideology is a kind of “social cement”, which serves to stabilize the society with “collectively shared values” (Thompson 2013: 9). These collectively shared values are also embedded in numerous audiovisual works. The dissemination of audiovisual works, especially films that can be shown in various countries, tends to be covered with the veil of politicization.

As the key bridge for the international dissemination of audiovisual works, audiovisual translation directly influences the target audiences’ understanding of the content of the works. Lefevere (1992) introduced the concept of “rewriting” in translation studies. He believes that translation itself is a rewriting process of the original text, and rewriting embodies manipulation. “All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology” (Lefevere 1992: vii). As far as audiovisual works are concerned, although each translator’s individual ideology will be different, to some extent, people who grow up in one cultural circle will hold similar ideas, so the translator will operate the manipulation of social mainstream ideology in the process of translation. To cater to the current dominant ideology, in some cases, the rewriting may even involve forgery, distortion of the original text, refusal of information, complete change of the original content or style, etc (Li 2009: 68). By doing so, the translator has participated in “the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture”, just like novel writers and politicians do, when they begin to write the original text (Gentzler and Tymoczko 2002: xxi). In terms of subtitled

audiovisual products, the subtitle translation completed by the subtitler is also an exposition of ideology in a particular political culture. Therefore, as Jorge Díaz Cintas's esuggests, "translation practice is never a neutral act of communication" (2012: 282). In the process of subtitle translation of audiovisual works, the subtitler may fall into ideology manipulation, which also makes their completed audiovisual works embodiments of ideology in turn.

### **Wolf Warrior II and The Wandering Earth**

Both films of *Wolf Warrior II* (2017) and *The Wandering Earth* (2019) focus on the theme of 'China saves the world'. *Wolf Warrior II* tells the story of Leng Feng, a former Chinese special forces soldier, who stumbles into an African war zone and saves Chinese citizens and locals held by Western mercenaries. *The Wandering Earth* is set in 2075 when the sun is about to be destroyed and the earth is no longer suitable for human survival. Faced with extinction, human beings start The Wandering Earth project, trying to escape the solar system with the earth through the propelling of tens of thousands of engines and find a new home for survival. Starting from the theme of 'China saves the world from its annihilation', *The Wandering Earth* has completed the shaping of China's increasingly powerful international image. It echoes with the "truth, goodness, and beauty" (Li 2017) as well as "the spirit of patriotism, collectivism, and socialism" (Wu 2012) advocated by Chinese social-political environment.

As of June 30, 2020, with its "strong patriotic tone" (Zuo 2017), *Wolf Warrior II*, the film that "greatly inspires the national pride of overseas Chinese" (Shi et. al. 2017), keeps its place as the top-grossing film in Chinese mainland, while *The Wandering Earth*, which is "a milestone for Chinese science fiction film" (Wang 2019), ranks third at the box office in Chinese mainland. As China's official media People.cn commented, from core values to details, *The Wandering Earth* has revealed a "strong Chinese style", and it has also realized the "dialogue with the future from China's perspective" (People.cn, 2019), which is highly accepted and recognized by the Chinese audiences. However, the English-speaking audiences do not have a high evaluation or acceptance towards the two Chinese mega-blockbusters. As of 31 August, 2020, the ratings of these two films on the English online database IMDb are both 6 out of 10<sup>1</sup>, which are far lower than those of other global mega-blockbusters, like *Avatar* (2009) (IMDb rating: 7.8 out of 10). Many English-speaking viewers have put forward that although the overall setting of *The Wandering Earth* is very "gorgeous", the "entire space plot may feel suspiciously familiar" (Tasha 2019), like that of various American blockbusters which have caused the audiences' aesthetic fatigue. Besides, as far as the technical principles in the film are concerned, some viewers argue that "pretty much any flaw *The Wandering Earth* can claim", it does (Tasha 2019), and that the background of the story that the earth itself has been moved from its orbit like a space ship is "absurd fantasy nonsense"<sup>2</sup>. For *Wolf Warrior II*, in addition to the common criticism that "the story, the acting, and the script are the movie's weakest points"<sup>3</sup>, the reason

why more English-speaking audiences gave it low scores focuses on the idea that the film is "utter Chinese propaganda, nothing more"<sup>4</sup>.

Unlike the majority of domestic Chinese-English subtitled films, both *Wolf Warrior II* and *The Wandering Earth* are multilingual films which are "shot [with] more than one language" (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014: 58) with both Chinese subtitles and English subtitles appearing at the bottom of the screen synchronously. By considering the two Chinese-English subtitled films as multilingual texts addressing multiple audiences of the Chinese audience and the English-speaking audience, this paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of the rewritten subtitles' ideological manipulation toward the audiences. To further discuss this question, this paper will explore how audiences from different social, cultural, ethnic backgrounds might use their experience and knowledge about Chinese society and politics to decode the rewritten subtitles in ways that contradict the intended meaning.

### **CHINESE SOCIAL-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF "MAIN MELODY" FILMS**

The Chinese social-political environment plays a significant role in the interpretation of the rewriting of the two films' subtitles. In this section, I will elaborate on the Chinese social-political environment of the "Main Melody" films, which propagandize the mainstream ideology of the Communist Party of China (CPC), represented by *Wolf Warrior II* and *The Wandering Earth*.

### **The Ultimate Censor in Chinese Film Industry**

China's surveillance of film translation has always been one of the most stringent among various translation activities (Jian 2012: 78). The Chinese films that can be broadcast and exported are works which the Communist Party of China (CPC), as well as the Chinese government, believes to be ideologically correct and worth being propagandized for shaping "the positive national image" (Li and Li 2012). The translation of these films is the concrete representation as well as direct reflection of the film content. And the public are inclined to be influenced by the information implied within the translation, thus deepening or alleviating the stereotype of an idea, an event, or a group, which is the most direct way for ideological manipulation in audiovisual translation.

Instead of possessing a robust and well-established film grading system, there is only the film censorship system regulated by the government in China. According to the Chinese-English version of the Oxford dictionary, "shencha/审查" reinforces the process of "examining or investigating," and sometimes "censorship" shares the meaning of "approval" or "editing" (Calkins 1998: 274-275). As early as 1998, Calkins pointed out in his article *Censorship in Chinese Cinema* that the body which controls Chinese cinema is the film regulatory authority which has different names at different times but all under the leadership of the CPC and the Chinese government. Nowadays, the China Film Review Commission (CFRC, Zhongguo dianying

shencha weiyuanhui/中国电影审查委员会) has the power to regulate films released in China. Organized by National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA, Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Guangbo Dianshizongju/中华人民共和国国家广播电视总局) for censoring films released in Chinese mainland, CFRC is a government body which is able to decide whether specific Chinese film can be released in Chinese mainland, and whether there is a need to edit certain contents for further scrutiny. As the direct supervision department of CFRC, NRTA is entitled to comprehensive and practical control over Chinese film industry. This control not only aims at the film content, but film translations as well, since they are also subject to manipulation encouraging them to abide by the rules and regulations set up by NRTA, the Chinese government's official watchdog for the mass media (Jian 2012: 78).

### Propaganda for "Main Melody"

Both Chinese and foreign films released in Chinese mainland must pass political as well as ideological censorship, yet "propaganda and censorship are two sides of the same coin" (Johnson 2012: 153). The purpose of censorship is to supervise propaganda, and also to make the mainstream ideology and cultural values that the CPC believes should be propagandized be displayed in films and television programs.

The American film industry has been dominating the global box office for a long time. As of June 30, 2020, without adjustment accordingly to inflation, the top fifty highest-grossing movies in the world are all produced and released by American companies, including Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Walt Disney Studios, Sony Pictures Entertainment, and others.<sup>5</sup> The Hollywood hegemony has also swept across China. As the release of *Titanic* (1997) enjoys great popularity in China, it also positions the Chinese audiences to feel cordial when talking about the characters, the plot, the classic lines, and even the expression of *Titanic* itself. After the release of the three-dimensional version of the Hollywood blockbuster *Titanic* in China in 2012, it "immediately ignited the fatigued spring filming market" (Zhang 2014: 25). The popularity of *Titanic 3D* (2012) in China is based on the Chinese audiences' psychological complex towards the classic, as the process of film watching reminds them of the good memories related to the film. Audiences generally responded that although the 3D effect was not very obvious, it did not affect their enthusiasm for the movie. The hegemony of Hollywood machinery in the global film industry is a typical example of audiovisual works' dissemination potentiality, yet the risk of wide popularity cannot be ignored. When the exchange of audiovisual works among various countries becomes "one-way traffic of goods and products from the more powerful culture to the weaker" (Díaz Cintas 2012: 282), the risky possibility of cultural assimilation or suppression increases sharply (ibid). On this occasion, audiovisual translation can serve as the accomplice of the cultural invasion and hegemony to some extent. Based on the assumption of the "cultural hegemony" of Hollywood movies, Chinese scholars begin to reflect that if Chinese movies want to change their vulnerable position

in the context of globalization and promote their movies to the world, they must actively participate in cross-cultural communication and vigorously disseminate "valued" as well as "orthodox" Chinese audiovisual works (Zhang 2014; Wei 2013; Ren and Xu 2011).

It is in such an environment that the special genre of "Main Melody/Mainstream" films has been adopted by the Chinese government "to minimize the Hollywood influences" (Su 2014: 101), thus "reflecting the established and current official discourse of the CPC" (Cai 2014: 185). The genre of "Main Melody" film emerged at the end of the 1980s in China (ibid.). Since the release of the iconic "Main Melody" film *The Founding Ceremony of The Nation* (*Kaiguo dadian*/《开国大典》) in 1989, the Chinese government has been explicitly advocating the promotion of "Main Melody". Chinese official media People.cn (Renminwang/人民网) suggests that "Main Melody" refers to "all literary and artistic works that advocate truth, goodness and beauty" (Li 2017), while Jiang Zemin, the former Chinese President, proposed the emphasis for "Main Melody" is that Chinese citizens are supposed to "carry forward the idea and the spirit of patriotism, collectivism and socialism" (Wu 2012). Altogether, these "Main Melody" films become the indispensable and crucial parts of the national ideological machinery, which aims to successfully persuade the public of the correctness as well as the effectiveness of socialist China and its current national policies. The CPC intends to gradually and imperceptibly establish this image of China in the hearts of the public through these movies, and make such a sense of identity deeply rooted in the minds of Chinese: It is a message that China is an anti-imperialist and capitalist country that serves people wholeheartedly, and a country that adheres to the socialist concept and will never waver (Su 2014: 101).

Therefore, the CPC and the Chinese government have attempted to capitalize on the wide dissemination opportunity of audiovisual works to make the "Main Melody" film a popular film genre in China and abroad. They hope that this genre of film will achieve favorable global effects as the "global hegemony" of Hollywood blockbusters, thus realizing its function as a means of effective propaganda and a tool of consolidating the authority of the ruling party (Cai 2014:184). While watching a "Main Melody" film, the target audience will comprehend the relationship among the characters and the film plot through the most direct way of translation. Song Ge, the investor of the "Main Melody" blockbuster film *Wolf Warrior II*, said at the press conference of *Beijing Culture 2019* that the acceptable films with "mainstream value" refer to the films which are capable of "stabilizing the society" and can "get the permission for filmmaking by the CPC and the state" (Sohu.com, 2019). In order to maintain the "accepted mainstream value" (ibid.) in the "positive energy"-dominated social-political environment (Ming 2018), and to avoid being "rejected by society and the ruling regime", the translator is also expected to concede to the "orthodox ideology", which is "compulsory and non-negotiable" (Cai 2014: 184).

## CASE ANALYSIS

In this section, through the analysis of typical subtitle cases in *Wolf Warrior II* and *The Wandering Earth*, I will elaborate on the possible interpretation of the subtitles by the Chinese audience and the English-speaking audience on the basis of their knowledge and experience regarding the Chinese society and politics.

### Wolf Warrior II

Scene 1:

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)
Lao He: 这帮黑哥们...	[Our African friends ...]
Back Translation: These black dudes...	Back Translation: 我们的非洲朋友...

After Leng Feng and Lao He, who fights alongside him, have succeeded in leading other African workers in the factory to escape attacks from the mercenaries, a celebration party begins to be held in the factory. During that time, they talk about the dancing African workers and call them “哥们 (dude)”. While this expression is intended to refer to these African workers, the subtitler deliberately avoids the sensitive information of “黑 (Black)” in the source language, and translates this expression with no specific political stance built into a phrase with positive connotation as “African friends” in the target language. The message conveyed by the rewritten subtitle translation is consistent with China’s diplomatic tropism of “placing Africa in an important position in China’s diplomatic relations” (Wang 2019), which imperceptibly realizes the presentation of China’s political tendency.

However, through the subtitler’s rewriting and employment of inclusive language in the translation, the English-speaking audience may not be able to interpret the subtitle’s intended implication of ‘friendliness’. As early as 2006, the diplomatic activity “Year of Africa” held by China has attracted cascading media and academic attention (Daniel 2008: 45). The frequent interaction and cooperation between China and Africa have aroused heated discussion from all circles in the West (Campbell 2008; Edoho 2011; Lumumba-Kasongo 2011; Xuan 2011). Many questions have been brought up: is China’s “economic invasion” of Africa a curse or cure? (Xuan 2011); “Is China transforming Africa?” (Theatlantic.com, 2013). These questions may be exacerbated by headlines, such as “China in Africa: Challenging US Global Hegemony” (Campbell 2008); and “is China-Africa relation a neo-imperialism or a neo-colonialism?” (Lumumba-Kasongo 2011). The global analysis, speculation, and concerns regarding China’s influence in Africa are ubiquitous. Although “China-Africa relations embody opportunities and threats” (Edoho 2011: 103), “the wider resurgence of China in world affairs” (Large 2008: 45) reflected through the rewritten subtitle, the portrayal of China as a “savior”, and the protagonist’s “patronizing attitude” towards African workers may position the English-speaking audience to think that the so-called appellation of “African friends” in the target language serves to imply “Africa as the

past [and the weaker], China as the future [and the stronger]” (Roberto 2018).

Scene 2:

SL	TL
Big Daddy: People like you will always be inferior to people like me.	[这个世界只有强者和弱者, 你们这种劣等民族永远属于弱者] Back Translation: There are only the strong and the weak in this world, and your inferior nation will always be the weak.
Leng Feng: 那他妈是以前。 Back Translation: That’s fucking past.	[That’s fucking history.]

Towards the end of the film, Leng Feng and Big Daddy, the leader of the Western mercenaries, are engaged in a final confrontation. At the crucial moment of victory and defeat, the above conversation ensues. As Big Daddy speaks English in the film, it is evident that the target audience for the Chinese subtitle translation are mainly Chinese. There are three key aspects to this ideological manipulation in this scene. First of all, there is no such phrase as “这个世界只有强者和弱者 (There are only the strong and the weak in this world)” in the source language. The subtitler employs the translation strategy of amplification to lay the foundation for the classification of “the strong” and “the weak” in the following lines. Secondly, “People like you” in the source language has been rewritten by the subtitler as “你们这种劣等民族 (your inferior nation)” and “弱者 (the weak)”. This rewritten subtitle undoubtedly arouses the hostility of Chinese audiences when they feel that their nation is insulted and despised. Thirdly, it is easy for the target audience to infer from the context in which the protagonist speaks this line that “强者 (the strong)” implied by the Chinese subtitle refers to the Westerners like Big Daddy. The subtitler adopts the translation strategy of explication, thus realizing the ‘deeper’ interpretation of the line “people like you” in the source language. As the climax of the whole film, when the protagonist Leng Feng comes to the final fight with Big Daddy after trial and battle, the Chinese subtitle of Big Daddy’s words undoubtedly further deepens the target audiences’ abomination of the intruders represented by him and their extremely provocative language. The subtitler’s rewriting deliberately strengthens the rendering of ethnic hatred and discord in the whole context. And this rewriting also breaks down the logical coherence of the source language, as the original lines only attempt to present a dialogue between Big Daddy and his rivals like Leng Feng, namely the “People”. The intentional prominence of “弱者 (the weak)” and “你们这种劣等民族 (your inferior nation)” in the Chinese subtitles may evoke the humiliating memory of the Chinese nation’s particular history of being bullied, as “in modern history, China’s realistic national crisis is caused and strengthened by the continuous military aggression, political blackmail, economic plunder, cultural as well as racial discrimination of great powers [including Western countries]” (Huang 2009: 79), which may still be deeply rooted

in everyone’s mind. Thus, under the influence of deliberately falsified translation (Kknews.cc, 2017), the focus of this dialogue has been shifted to patriotism and nationalism, which successfully provokes and manipulates the inconspicuous suppressed emotion of Chinese audiences. Meanwhile, Leng Feng’s response “那他妈是以前 (That’s fucking history)” to Big Daddy further boosts the antagonistic emotion. As a result, in the social environment that advocates “the patriotic action of the Chinese people should not be stigmatized” (Hongqi.tv, 2012), the stereotype of Big Daddy as a Western invader and bully has been reinforced again by the rewritten subtitle, and the Chinese audiences’ emotion of maintaining national honor may be stimulated to the highest point.

Scene 3:

SL	TL
Big Daddy: I sure hope these Chinese people don’t die. Back Translation: 我自然是希望这些中国人别给死了。	[中国佬, 你可别死。] Back Translation: Chinaman, you must not die.

In a fighting scene, Leng Feng succeeds in breaking out of the encirclement of the mercenaries led by Big Daddy, who then utters an ironic sigh. In this scene, the expression of “Chinese people” in the source language originally functions as the reference of Chinese soldiers. However, the subtitler translates “Chinese people” from the source language into “中国佬 (Chinaman)”, an expression with overt discriminatory and insulting meanings which are not reflected in the source language, while the target language, after being rewritten by the subtitler, arouses the Chinese audiences’ indignant response to the “malicious” Westerners represented by Big Daddy, who deserves “accusation, criticism, repression, and [scathing] mockery” (Tang 2015). The subtitler’s falsification of the message expressed in the source language escalates the contradictions in the film to racial discrimination, which strengthens the Chinese audiences’ dissatisfaction with these scoundrel Westerners since they “must not underestimate the anti-human nature of the evil forces in the West” (Hanfeng1918.com, 2019), and rationalizes this emotion of dissatisfaction, thus consolidating the glorious image of Leng Feng as a national hero who is full of “positive energy” (Zhang 2013) to remove these evils for Chinese people.

### The Wandering Earth

Scene 1:

SL	TL
Li Yiyi: 怎么还有外国人? Back Translation: Why is there a foreigner?	[Why is there a foreigner in your unit?]
Tim: 谁是外国人? Back Translation: Who’s a foreigner?	[Who’s a foreigner?]
Tim: 正儿八百的中国心。 Back Translation: I have a sincere Chinese heart.	[I am an authentic Chinese.]

In order to prevent *The Wandering Earth* project from failing due to mechanical failure, a Chinese rescue unit headed by Liu Qi begins to head to the corresponding base for the repairing of the engine essential for survival. On the way to the destination, Li Yiyi, a Chinese engineer who boards the motor vehicle later, becomes very curious when he sees Tim, a Chinese-Australian half-breed with the feature of Western appearance. Li asks “怎么还有外国人 (Why is there a foreigner in your unit)”, and Tim responds to him in Chinese (the above line). Combining the background and the atmosphere, the Chinese audience can realize that the plot here is intended to express a sense of humor via the lines and give the audience a humorous experience. However, with the rewritten translation of “中国心 (Chinese heart)” into “Chinese” and the western appearance of Tim showing in the scene, the English-speaking audience may not only fail to appreciate the humor effect, but also question whether it represents “China’s grand plan to take over the world” (John 2019), shows “China’s burning ambition” (Aldhous 2005: 1152), as the idea that the media have been promoting in English<sup>6</sup>.

Scene 2:

When the protagonist Liu Peiqiang opens the door of the space station, there is a flash shot — Made in China. For this shot, there is no corresponding Chinese subtitle translation, as the English expression of “Made in China” is not unfamiliar to people all over the world. Through the sign in this film, it highlights China’s significant contribution to the space station of the whole world. And it also conveys that China cannot only manufacture small objects with low technical requirements but is competent for the cutting-edge technologies such as the manufacturing of space station facility parts as well, thus reinforcing its outstanding ability in the international field of science and technology.

Considering that the CPC has been calling attention to the products which are “Made in China”, and Chinese media have been encouraging the public to be proud of the concept of “Made in China” (Sohu.com 2019), although there is no subtitle translation regarding this sign, it may encourage the Chinese audience to interpret the “semiotic complexity” (Diaz Cintas and Remael 2014: 45) formed by the combination of the image and the visually transmitted verbal sign (Delabastita 1989: 199) “Made in China” in the film positively, which echoes with Chinese national policy of “building a strong scientific and technological country in the world” (Wang 2018) proposed by the Chinese government. However, according to the *Economist* best book of the year *Poorly Made in China: An Insider’s Account of the China Production Game* (Midler 2011), the product that is “poorly made in China” (Midler 2011: xiv) may remind people of the “unscrupulous and frustrating behavior” (Midler 2011: x) of certain Chinese businessmen, while “the country of production [has] a significant negative effect on brand image, brand trust, and perceived quality of the global brands when [customers] learn that China [is] the country of production (Ar and Kara 2014: 491)”. As the information received by the English-speaking audience may be more inclined to emphasize that the “Made in China” label is synonymous with low-cost and low-quality (Futurity.org, 2016), when this sign is displayed on the screen, it may even arouse their inner resistance.

Therefore, although this scene particularly emphasizes and realizes the utilization of its “great semiotic complexity” where various sign systems interact to establish “a coherent story” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014: 45), The audiences from different social and cultural backgrounds may use their particular perception of Chinese society to interpret the subtitles completely differently from its intended meaning.

#### Scene 3:

The international organization that coordinates the affairs of various nations in *The Wandering Earth* is called the United Earth Government. It consists of five countries represented by China, the United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom, which are in line with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in reality. When the organization is mentioned in the film, based on the display of the national flags of five countries in the image, the subtitler has not translated the names of the countries. It is worth noting that every time the United Earth Government is mentioned in the film, the Chinese national flag always appears in the middle of the five national flags in the image. Since the film’s semiotic systems play comprehensive as well as crucial parts for the development of the storyline as a whole, the visually rendered information within the image of the film “must be taken into account because it is part of the image” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014: 46).

According to the *2018 Network Buzzword Ranking List* issued by Sohu.com, from January to September in 2018, the buzzword “C Position (C位)” ranked fourth with 58.549 million information load on the whole network. This particular vocabulary originates from the field of online games and becomes familiar to the public in China as it is employed in a popular Chinese reality show *Idol Producer*. The abbreviation “C” in the word refers to “core” and “center”, thus it can be translated as “Center Position (中心位置)”, which reveals the significance of being in the central position (Sohu.com, 2018). By placing the Chinese national flag at the center, it subtly implies China’s central position in the United Nations Earth Government and its irreplaceable importance. Through the suggestive filmic sign, the film has further completed the portrayal of “China’s image as a great power on the international stage” (Gov.cn, 2015) proposed by former Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, which meets the requirements of the CPC and the Chinese government for acceptable “mainstream values” (Sohu.com, 2019).

Thus, Chinese audiences’ long-lasting attention towards the “Center Position” is the key to their positive understanding of these scenes. Also, under the CPC’s vigorous promotion of patriotism, the Chinese audience are very concerned about the issue regarding “China’s increasing influence in the United Nations” (Wan 2017). While the English-speaking audience may find it repulsive as the special arrangement that places China in the center again shows “China’s ambition in various international affairs” (Katherine 2016: 909), it can arouse the inner pride of the Chinese audience and consolidate their patriotic enthusiasm.

## CONCLUSION

Chinese social-political environment sets the tone for the rewriting of audiovisual works’ subtitles. Undoubtedly, the

rewritten subtitles of *Wolf Warrior II* and *The Wandering Earth* reveal the manipulation of Chinese national political ideology under the regime of the CPC and the Chinese government as well. The subtitle translation in *Wolf Warrior II* profoundly and skillfully conveys China’s current orthodox ideology under the leadership of the CPC, while that of *The Wandering Earth*, as well as the “visually transmitted verbal sign” (Delabastita 1989: 199), which refers to “the written documents [like letters] that appear on the screen” (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2014: 47), also implies the acknowledged ‘politically correct’ messages in Chinese society.

However, the ideology manipulation embedded in the two films’ rewritten subtitles works differently on the viewers from different backgrounds, which is reflected through the interpretation of subtitles by the Chinese audience and the English-speaking audience. On the one hand, the ideological manipulation of subtitle translation works more effectively for the Chinese audience. For example, in *Wolf Warrior II*, the intended meaning of the dialogue between Big Daddy and the protagonist may be completely ignored by the Chinese audience after the hostility-arousal rewriting by the subtitler. Moreover, the Chinese audience may be sensitive to the special settings of deliberately deleted subtitles in the films. Especially in the cases concerning ‘patriotism’, ‘nationalism’ and ‘xenophobia’ advocated by the ultimate censor of the CPC and the Chinese government, Chinese audiences’ patriotic enthusiasm is likely to be consolidated in the film watching, and their sense of opposition towards the ‘evil capitalism represented by the West’ may be unconsciously deepened as well. On the other hand, the ideological manipulation of subtitle translation does not work well on English-speaking audiences. The most substantial point is that the English-speaking audience’s overall social mainstream consciousness cannot identify with the powerful and dominant image China has been trying to create and emphasize in these “Main Melody” films. For this reason, some rewritten subtitles that are intended to imply ‘the power of China’ and ‘China’s image of justice’, or even those designed to create humor, may position the English-speaking audience to interpret them quite differently from the intended meaning, and may cause English-speaking audiences’ repugnance towards China’s “hollow hypocrisy” (Jonah 2020).

## END NOTES

1. IMDb: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7605074/reviews?ref\\_=tt\\_urv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7605074/reviews?ref_=tt_urv); [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_2](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2)
2. The Review by NurgleTheUnclean: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7605074/reviews?ref\\_=tt\\_urv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7605074/reviews?ref_=tt_urv)
3. The Review by Andy\_Aitken: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/reviews?ref\\_=tt\\_urv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/reviews?ref_=tt_urv)
4. The Review by Neranuhbarp: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/reviews?ref\\_=tt\\_urv](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7131870/reviews?ref_=tt_urv)
5. All Time Box Office: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/> (accessed 30 June 2020)
6. New.com.au, Forbes.com, and Janpantimes.co.jp have published online articles on the theme of ‘China wants to dominate the world’: News.com.au: <https://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/chinas-30year-deadline->

to-rule-the-world/newsstory/ 70f62a5bc0e4580b83d-5ca89a2479e94; Forbes.com: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnmauldin/2019/11/12/chinas-grand-plan-to-take-over-the-world/#70f01d05ab5d>; Janpantimes.co.jp: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/05/22/commentary/world-commentary/china-reallywant-dominate-world/>

## REFERENCES

- Ar, Aybeniz. Akdeniz and Kara, Ali (2014). 'Emerging market consumers' country of production image, trust and quality perceptions of global brands made-in China', *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. 23(7): 491-503 DOI: 10.1108/JPBM-12-2013-0472
- Aldhous, Peter (2005) 'China's Burning Ambition', *Nature* 435, 1152-1154 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/4351152a>
- Cai, Shenshen (2014) 'An Unconventional Mainstream Film: The Founding of a Republic', *Asian Cinema*, 25(2): 183-203. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.25.2.183\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.25.2.183_1)
- Calkins, Marry Lynne (1998) 'Censorship in Chinese Cinema', *Hastings Comm. & Ent. LJ*, 21(2) 239.
- Campbell, Horace (2008) 'China in Africa: challenging US global hegemony', *Third World Quarterly*, 29(1), 89-105. DOI: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20455027>
- Delabastita, Dirk (1989) 'Translation and Mass-Communication: Film and TV Translation as Evidence of Cultural Dynamics', *Babel* 35(4): 193-218.
- Díaz Cintas, Jorge (2012) 'Clearing the Smoke to See the Screen: Ideological Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation', *Meta* 57(2): 279-293.
- Díaz-Cintas, Jorge and Remael, Aline (2014) *Audiovisual Translation: Subtitling*, London: Routledge.
- Edoho, Felix. M. (2011). 'Globalization and Marginalization of Africa: Contextualization of China—Africa Relations', *Africa Today*, 58(1), 103-124
- Futurity.org (2016) "How 'Made in China' Got a Bad Reputation", Futurity.org. Available online at [<https://www.futurity.org/made-in-china-1116202-2/#:~:text=For%20many%20Americans%2C%20the%20%E2%80%9CMade,%2Dcost%20and%20low%2Dquality.&text=Han%20can%20point%20to%20several,and%20US%2DChina%20trade%20disputes.>] (accessed 7 March, 2016)
- Gentzler, Edwin and Tymoczko, Maria (2002) 'Introduction', in Gentzler, E. & Tymoczko, M. (eds) *Translation and Power* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. XI-XXVIII
- Gov.cn (2015) '李克强: 中国在国际舞台上负责任大国形象日益彰显[Li Keqiang: China's Image as a Responsible Great Power on the International Stage has Become Increasingly Prominent]', Gov.cn. Available online at [[http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2015-03/05/content\\_2826346.htm](http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2015-03/05/content_2826346.htm)] (accessed 5 March, 2015).
- Hanfeng1918.com (2019) '决不能低估西方资本邪恶势力的反人类性 [We Must not Underestimate the Anti Human Nature of the Evil Forces of Western Capital]', Hanfeng1918.com. Available online at [<http://hanfeng1918.com/baijia/20474.html>] (accessed 16 November, 2019).
- Hongqi.tv (2012) '中国人民的爱国主义行动不容污蔑 [The Patriotic Actions of the Chinese People Should not be Stigmatized]', Hongqi.tv. Available online at [<http://www.hongqi.tv/hydz/2012-09-17/2288.html>] (accessed 17 September, 2012).
- Huang, Xingtao (2009) '情感、思想与运动:近代中国民族主义研究检视[Emotion, Thoughts, and Movement: A Review of the Study of Nationalism in Modern China]', 广东社会科学 [*Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences*], 3: 79-89
- Jian, Li. (2012) 'Ideological and Aesthetic Constraints on Audio-visual Translation: Mr. & Mrs. Smith in Chinese', *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 21(2): 77-93.
- John, Mauldin (2019) 'China's Grand Plan To Take Over The World', Forbes.com. Available online at [<https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnmauldin/2019/11/12/chinas-grand-plan-to-take-over-the-world/#3523acf25ab5>] (accessed 12 November, 2019)
- Johnson, Matthew. D. (2012) 'Propaganda and Censorship in Chinese Cinema' in Zhang, Yingjin. (ed.) *A Companion to Chinese Cinema*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. 153-178.
- Jonah, Goldberg (2020) 'The Hollow Hypocrisy of China Calling Out the United States', TheDispatch.com. Available online at [<https://thedispatch.com/p/the-hollow-hypocrisy-of-china-calling>] (accessed 3 June, 2020)
- Katherine, Morton (2016) 'China's Ambition in the South China Sea: Is a Legitimate Marine Order Possible?', *International Affairs*, 92(4): 909-940
- Kknews.cc. (2017) '「老爹」弗蘭克怒對《戰狼2》翻譯小組，稱其為票房歪曲事實 [Big Daddy] Frank Gets Angry with the Subtitle Translation Team of *Wolf Warrior II* and Accuses Them of Distorting the Facts for the Box Office'. Kknews.cc. Available online at [<https://kknews.cc/entertainment/l23kjp2.html>] (accessed 19 December, 2017).
- Large, Daniel (2008) "Beyond 'dragon in the bush': the study of China-Africa relations", *African affairs*, 107(426), 45-61
- Lefevere, André (1992). *Translation, rewriting, and the manipulation of literary fame*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Li, Chunli and Li, Lei (2012) '国产电影应塑造积极正面的国家形象[Domestic Movies are Supposed to Shape Positive National Image]', People.com.cn. Available online at [<http://culture.people.com.cn/h/2012/0117/c226948-287107029.html>] (accessed 17 January, 2012)
- Li, Yunlei (2017) '让主旋律之路越走越远 [Let the Road of "Main Melody" be Much Wider]', People.cn. Available online at [<http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2017/1114/c1003-29643913.html>] (accessed 14 November, 2017)
- Li, Zhiping (2009) 'Return to Translation-On Rewriting Theory of Cultural School [回归翻译——兼评文化学派的改写论]', *Shanghai Translation [上海翻译]*, 4: 67-69
- Lumumba-Kasongo, Tukumbi (2011) 'China-Africa relations: A neo-imperialism or a neo-colonialism? A reflection', *African and Asian Studies*, 10(2-3), 234-266.
- Midler, Paul (2011) *Poorly made in China: an insider's account of the China production game*, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass.
- Ming, Zhenjiang (2018) '主旋律更响亮 正能量更强劲 (逐梦40年) [China's Screen Masterpieces: Singing the Main Melody to Encourage Positive Energy (Pursuing

- the Dream for 40 years)’, People.cn. Available online at [http://culture.people.com.cn/n1/2018/1115/c1013-30401336.html] (accessed 15 November, 2018)
- People.cn (2019) ‘《流浪地球》：中国科幻有能力讲好自己的故事 [The Wandering Earth: Chinese Science Fiction Movie has the Ability to Tell Its Own Story]’, People.cn. Available online at [http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0214/c64387-30674287.html] (accessed 14 February, 2019)
- Ren, Hai and Xu, Qingchao (2011) ‘媒体外交：一种软权力的传播与扩散 [Media Diplomacy: Dissemination and Diffusion of Soft Power]’, 当代世界与社会, 4: 119-123
- Roberto, Castillo (2018) ‘What “blackface” tells us about China’s patronising attitude towards Africa’, Theconversation.com. Available online at [https://theconversation.com/what-blackface-tells-us-about-chinas-patronising-attitude-towards-africa-92449] (accessed 7 March, 2018)
- Shi, Jingnan; Bai, Ying; Wang, Yang; Zhang, Manzi (2017) ‘为什么是《战狼2》？——中国电影票房新高的启示 [Why Wolf Warrior II? — Enlightenment from the High Grossing Box Office Chinese Film]’. Xinhua Net. Available online at: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-08/15/c\_1121485735.htm] (accessed 15 August, 2017)
- Sohu.com (2018) ‘2018 网络流行语C位之争 [C Position Competition of the Network Buzzword in 2018s]’. Available online at [http://www.sohu.com/a/257132148\_499808] (accessed 30 September, 2018)
- Sohu.com (2019) ‘影视创作中的“主流价值观”和“正能量”不能只可意会不可言传 [“Mainstream Values” and “Positive Energy” in Film and Television Can Not be Particularly Ambiguous]’. Available online at [http://www.sohu.com/a/321706190\_341324] (accessed 19 June, 2019)
- Sohu.com (2019) ‘中国制造，我骄傲 [Being Proud of “Made in China”]’, Sohu.com. Available online at [https://www.sohu.com/a/361713286\_528116] (accessed 20 December, 2019)
- Su, Wendy (2014) ‘Cultural policy and film industry as negotiation of power: the Chinese State’s Role and Strategies in its Engagement with Global Hollywood 1994–2012’, *Pacific Affairs* 87(1): 93-114.
- Tang, Yuankai (2015) ‘Foreigners in Chinese Movies [老外，入中国电影]’, Chinatoday.com. Available online at [http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/chinese/culture/ys/201512/t20151229\_800045664.html] (accessed 29 December, 2015)
- Tasha, Robinson (2019) ‘China’s Blockbuster The Wandering Earth is Gorgeous, Goofy, and on Netflix Now’, Theverge.com. Available online at [https://www.theverge.com/2019/2/9/18218479/the-wandering-earth-review-film-china-first-science-fiction-blockbuster-cixin-liu-netflix] (accessed 6 May, 2019)
- Theatlantic.com (2013) ‘Is China Transforming Africa?’, Theatlantic.com. Available online at [https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/03/is-china-transforming-africa/274401/] (accessed 27 March, 2013)
- Thompson, John. B. (2013) *Ideology and modern culture: Critical social theory in the era of mass communication*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons
- Wan, Jingzhang (2017) ‘亲历中国在联合国影响力的不断提升 [Experience the Continuous Improvement of China’s Influence in the UN]’, Zgds.com. Available online at [http://www.zgds.com/mobile/newsx.asp?id=621] (accessed 2017)
- Wang, Shoubao (2019) ‘中国外长连续29年每年首访来非洲 王毅：用行动表明将非洲置于中国外交重要位置 [For 29 Consecutive Years, China’s Foreign Minister Keeps Choosing Africa as His First Diplomatic Visiting Destination Wang Yi: Placing Africa in an Important Position in China’s Diplomatic Relations by Action]’. Xinhua News Agency. Available online at [http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2019-01/03/content\_5354655.htm] (accessed 3 January, 2019)
- Wang, Xinyuan (2019) ‘“The Wandering Earth”: A milestone for Chinese science fiction films’. CGTN.com. Available online at [https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d-3d514e3563544e32457a6333566d54/index.html] (accessed 9 February, 2019)
- Wang, Zihui (2018) ‘建设世界科技强国，看习近平十大关键词 [Building a Strong Scientific and Technological Country in the World—Have a Look at the Top Ten Key Words Brought up by Xi Jinping]’. Xinhua Net. Available online at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/xxjxs/2018-05/30/c\_1122908666.htm] (accessed 30 May, 2018)
- Wei, Zuoguo (2013) ‘对增强中华文化国际影响力的思考’ [Thoughts on Enhancing the International Impact of Chinese Culture], 求实 [Seeking Truth], 7: 75-78
- Wu, Maochang (2012) ‘江泽民对音乐方面“弘扬主旋律，提倡多样化”的思考 [Jiang Zemin’s Thoughts on “Promoting the Main Melody and Advocating Diversity” in Music]’. CPC.people.com.cn. Available online at [http://dangshi.people.com.cn/n/2012/1127/c85037-19715112.html] (accessed 27 November, 2012)
- Xuan, Rice (2011) ‘China’s economic invasion of Africa’, Theguardian.com. Available online at [https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/06/chinas-economic-invasion-of-africa] (accessed 7 February, 2011)
- Zhang, Mingyu (2013) ‘习近平：汇聚起全面深化改革的强大正能量 [Xi Jinping: Bringing Together a Powerful Positive Energy for Deepening Reform in an All-Round Way]’. Xinhua Net. Available online at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/28/c\_118339435.htm] (accessed 28 November, 2013)
- Zhang, Yan (2014) ‘从好莱坞电影看美国文化传播及对中国的启示’ [Observation of American Cultural Communication Based on Hollywood Films and Its Enlightenment to China], 今传媒 [Today’s Massmedia], 22(3): 24-26.
- Zuo, Mandy (2017) ‘The Reason for Wolf Warrior II’s Runaway Success in China is What’s Keeping Western Viewers Away’, South China Morning Post. Available online at [https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2105954/reason-wolf-warrior-2s-runaway-success-china-whats-keeping] (accessed 8 August, 2017)