

# A Study on the Subtitle Translation of Culture-loaded Words in *One Battle After Another* from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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## Abstract

This thesis analyzes the Chinese subtitle translation of culture-loaded words in the film *One Battle After Another* by applying the theory of Functional Equivalence proposed by Eugene Nida through a case study of material, and it is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of functional equivalence theory. In social, religious and linguistic domains, the study finds that there are domain specific strategies to select from. The results reveal that the material words strike a balance between technicality and authenticity through explicitation and calque; the social words depend upon transposition and explicitation to achieve functional adaptation; religious terms use calque to maintain the symbolical irony; linguistic words value the emotional effects, using transposition. This paper confirms the validity of Functional Equivalence Theory in AVT and offers guidance on how to translate some media texts that have complicated socio-political background connotations.

## Keywords

Functional Equivalence Theory, culture-loaded words, subtitle translation

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## 1. Introduction

Film is not only an art form with shadows, it's also a culture bridge connecting different countries together. In this era of digital media, foreign films and TV programs have been important windows through which Chinese people can view the outside world or learn about different cultures. However, the linguistic conversion cannot be just symbol replacement especially in case of texts involving special historic memory, political ecology, and lifestyle of a nation. How to accurately convey the deep connotations of these culture-loaded words has become a core issue in translation studies.

Although conventional translation theories tend to be in dilemma between faithfulness and fluency, Eugene Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory provides us with a new angle of vision on AVT. Functional Equivalence Theory stresses equivalence of audience response, suggesting that the target text be achieved as an active effect similar to the source text, which is in line with the immediacy and popularity of subtitle translation. Since the film *One Battle After Another* is very rich with culture-loaded words from material, social, religious and linguistics fields, the present study selects this set of genres for analyzing how the translator deals with cross-cultural differences through, e.g., explicitation, calque and transposition.

The organization of this thesis is as following: Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the background, motivation of this work, and the research objectives. Chapter 2 gives a literature review of culture-loaded word, Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory, and subtitle translation. Chapter 3 presents the theory as well as the methodological approach to the case study that has been used here. In Chapter 4, the heart of this thesis, a thorough data analysis is performed on these four types of culture-loaded words found in the movie. And at last, in chapter 5 we summarize our main results, discuss some applications and limitations of this work.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter gives an overview of the theoretical and empirical literature on which this paper is based. It starts with discussing the definition and categorization of culture-loaded words, and then further discusses the translation methods applied in overcoming culture clashes, followed by an analysis on the basic concepts of Functional Equivalence theory proposed by Eugene Nida as well as a review of its development status in China. Last but not least, the chapter portrays the technical limitations and the multi-semiotic character of subtitle translation that constitute the actual parameters for the following data analysis.

### 2.1 Research on Culture-Loaded Words

Culture-loaded word means the vocabulary which is used in a certain culture and reflects their way of life, history, and society. Nida [1] divided them in to the following five categories: biology, material culture, social culture, religious culture, and linguistics culture. Newmark [2] further refined this view and argued that these words can be seen as untranslatable in the strict sense because of being culturally rooted. In China, Liao [3] defined them as carriers of specific cultural information that create lexical gaps during translation.

To address these lexical gaps, the translation of culture-loaded words is viewed as a process of cross-cultural negotiation. Nida [4] argues that the priority should be functional equivalence rather than formal correspondence. Beyond the macro-strategies of domestication and foreignization, this study focuses on more specific technical strategies commonly used in audiovisual translation:

**Explication:** This refers to making implicit information in the source text explicit in the target text. It is often achieved through generalization (using a hypernym or superordinate to make the reference more accessible) or specification (adding specific details to clarify a cultural reference).

**Calque:** Also called loan translation, it refers to the imitation in form or style of the source text and can be employed for official titles or particular model names to retain their formal features from the source text.

**Transposition:** This approach replaces one concept of culture originating in the source language by an equivalent concept in the destination culture and works well on idioms, metaphors, and pop-culture references, to make it clear to the reader what is supposed to be done right away.

**Borrowing:** Refers to borrowing of a word or an expression from the target language and using it in the target language, but it has been put into a naturalised form, that is, made grammatically and phonetically correct according to the target language's linguistic norms.

### 2.2 Functional Equivalence Theory

Eugene Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory, which was introduced into China since the 1980s, has exerted a great influence on Chinese translation studies, and translating not word for word but the same effect. The key idea here is that the new target audience must receive the same psychological reaction as did the old one [5].

For today's media, this theory can be adapted to allow some leeway when dealing with culture gap issues encountered in AVT. As shown by researchers like Qiao [6] from China, there is an optimal point on the domestication-foreignization scale at which subtitle translations are functionally equivalent; beyond that point, the subtitled text might fail to convey cultural specifics—humor or social status—to its target language readership, namely Chinese viewers in our case. Moreover, Shao [7] argues that Functional Equivalence theory can be applied widely in film translation as the primary job of the translator is to facilitate the audience bridging the gap between the visual image and the translated text. However, Huang [8] warns us not to over-simplify

the concept of equivalence and reminds us we need to use this theory with caution so as to achieve the full potential meaning behind a complicated idea contained within a movie plot on an ideological level.

### 2.3 Nature and Constraints of Subtitle Translation

Subtitle translation is a primary form of AVT, which involves a shift from oral source language to written target text [9]. Unlike conventional literary translation, subtitling has been deemed to be fragile since they are accompanied by the source audio and pictures, allowing for an immediate comparison of the translation and the source by the audience [10].

A defining feature of subtitling is its strict technical constraints. As noted by Li [11] and Yang [12], subtitles have to be matched to the pace of speech; A line of text is usually limited to about 14~16 Chinese characters, or no longer than 6~7 seconds on the display screen. These limitations necessitate constrained translation, where translators prioritize the most relevant information to achieve the mini-max effect—obtaining the maximum communicative effect with minimum processing effort from the audience [13].

Moreover, subtitles function within a multi-semiotic environment where meaning is constructed through the interplay of images, sound, and text [14]. Since visual and sound channels add extra information, translators may resort to compression, omission, and substitution to keep the story moving forward [15]. This poly-semiotic feature enables the translator to be concerned about the function equivalence with a view of making the subtitles coordinated with the on-screen action so as to express foreign cultural specifics in a confined space [10].

## 3. Theory and Research Method

This chapter provides the theoretical and methodological background for this study. Based on Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory as well as a classification system of culture-loaded words, thus offers an adequate basis for further case study and comparison with the subtitle translation of *One Battle After Another*.

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework: Functional Equivalence Theory

The theoretical foundation of this study is Functional Equivalence Theory, proposed by the American linguist Eugene A. Nida. Nida defines translation as “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” [16]. Functional Equivalence Theory does not pursue a goal of formal equivalence but instead focuses on the communicative effect of the translation. The fundamental aim here is for the equivalent effect to be realized: a translation succeeds if the receptor of the translated text reacts on the message in much the same way as the original receptor [4].

To systematically evaluate this effect, Nida elaborates that functional equivalence should be pursued at four primary levels:

**Lexical Equivalence:** Finding equivalents for individual words that carry cultural or emotional weight.

**Syntactic Equivalence:** Adjusting sentence structures to fit the grammatical norms of the target language.

**Textual Equivalence:** Maintaining the coherence and logical flow of the entire discourse.

**Stylistic Equivalence:** Preserving the tone, register, and rhetorical features of the original text.

In the field of movie subtitling where both time and space are extremely restricted, lexical and stylistic equivalence become more important. These four levels will be used to analyze the examples in Chapter 4, translating how methodologies help overcome culture barriers to generate a living response.

### 3.2 Classification of Culture-Loaded Words

To provide a systematic structure for the subsequent analysis, this study adopts Nida's classification of culture-loaded words. Nida [1] proposed that cultural differences are reflected in language across five distinct domains:

**Ecology:** Words related to geographical features, climate, flora and fauna.

**Material Culture:** Terms involving food, clothing, housing, tools and weapons.

**Social Culture:** Expressions concerning social organizations, customs, politics, and historical events.

**Religious Culture:** Vocabulary tied to religious beliefs, myths, and rituals.

**Linguistic Culture:** Idioms, metaphors, and puns that reflect the unique structures of a language.

This study will categorize the translation examples from *One Battle After Another* according to these domains to evaluate how functional equivalence is achieved in each category.

### 3.3 Research Methods

The present study is mainly based upon the case study method with the movie *One Battle After Another* being used as the main object of analysis, and some culture-loaded words used in the movie subtitle are selected for investigation which include material cultural terms such as military terms and social cultural terms like racial slurs or political metaphors, to explore what particular translation strategies the translator adopted in this actual case scenario.

To analyze these selections, a comparative analysis is conducted between the English source text (ST) and the Chinese target text (TT). By comparing the linguistic form and the intended function of the culture-loaded words in both languages, this stage of the research evaluates the shifts and adaptations made during the translation process.

In addition to that comparison, the research also compares if the translation is dynamic equivalent. This part of the comparison seeks to identify whether or not the translator places more value on the reader's psychological reaction and ease of understanding than the fidelity of meaning: especially if dealing with the particular technical restrictions of AVT.

## 4. Data Analysis

The film *One Battle After Another* is adapted from *Vineland* by the American postmodernist master Thomas Pynchon. Its narrative covers not only a thrilling escape story but also a profound deconstruction of the conflict between radicalism and conservatism, and white supremacy versus multiculturalism in American society. Bob Ferguson, a destitute revolutionary, lives in a perpetual state of hyper-vigilance and paranoia, isolated from the outside world and sharing a life of mutual dependence with his resilient, independent daughter, Vera. However, when Bob's nemesis, Lockjaw, resurfaces after sixteen years and Vera suddenly vanishes, this former radical is thrust into a frantic journey to find her.

Terms in the film such as "French 75" and "Grand Wizard" are not mere labels but cultural symbols loaded with deep socio-political meanings. For Chinese audiences, the cultural context behind these terms is often missing.

Since the ecological terms featured in this film primarily appear as proper nouns or brand names, here they have been classified into either the material or sociocultural categories for discussion based on their specific functions.

### 4.1 Material Culture-Loaded Words

For technical terms (such as HMEs), the focus is on explicitation to reduce cognitive load; whereas for most terms with specific historical or brand connotations (such as French 75 and Whisperdoo), calque is used to preserve the authenticity and exotic charm of the original. Examples can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies of Material Culture-loaded Words

Example	Translation	Strategy
HMEs	武器库	Explicitation
French 75	法式75组织	Calque
Hummingbird Whisperdoo 238	蜂鸟啾啾238	Calque
Dynamite Dolphin 335	炸药海豚335	Calque

**Example:** Listen, I got HMEs. [00:02:13]

**Translation:** 我的车就是个武器库。(My car is an arsenal.)

The French 75 was planning to attack the Otay Mesa Immigration Detention Center. When being asked “What you draggin’ in that wagon,” Bob Ferguson (the answered “I got mortars, I got tear gas, I got whatever you guys need,” demonstrating his ability to provide ample ammunition reserves and showcasing his confidence in the revolution as well as his identity as a comrade-in-arms of Perfidia. “HMEs” stands for “Home Made Explosives.” While a literal translation as “自制炸药 (homemade explosives)” achieves formal equivalence, it sounds overly technical and stiff in a cinematic context. The translator employs the strategy of explicitation, specifically utilizing generalization, replacing the original particular word by the more general “arsenal,” thus reducing the mental effort of the reader. In terms of function equivalence, this method gives up the lexicon equivalence while keeping the style equivalence with its concise, military tone. This rendition not only covers the gunpowder and other military supplies on board the vehicle, but also projects to readers that the hero is strong enough to be called a veteran “revolutionary comrade.” Finally, the psychological impact experienced by Chinese listeners on hearing “arsenal” is equal-effectively as the professional impact experienced by English speakers on hearing “HMEs.”

**Example:** You are a political prisoner of the French 75! [00:08:05]

**Translation:** 你们现在是政治犯，由法式75组织执行关押。(You are now political prisoners, detained by the French 75 Organization.)

Historically, “French 75” refers to the famous 75mm field gun used in World War I, and it is also the name of a cocktail made from gin, champagne, lemon juice, and sugar. In this film, it serves as the code name for the resistance group the protagonist belongs to. The translator adopts the strategy of calque, which keeps the exotic flavour of the source word. However, from a functional equivalence point of view, this translation may suffer from some kind of culture loss, because ordinary Chinese audiences can not easily link up with “French75” and WWI artillery or the brutality of war at first glance. The translator opted, therefore, for retaining the original organizational code names, and relied instead on the radical on-screen behaviour of this particular group to help the viewer draw his or her own cultural conclusions from it. This mode of processing takes advantage of the multi-semiotic nature of film, where the visual channel complements the semantic gaps of the linguistic channel. Because there is so much visual information onscreen about the radicalism of the group, it is not necessary to explain all this verbally for viewers to gain an idea of how important the group was. In seeking functional equivalence, it is also a pragmatic middle ground.

To sum up, the translation strategy for the material culture-loaded words used in this film can be described as a compromise based on pragmatism to strike a balance between retaining the sense of exotic realness and making it cognitively accessible. For example, for some very specialized vocabulary such as “HMEs,” thus, by means of explicitation the translator places priority on the audience’s immediate understanding of the narrative function rather than literal accuracy. Conversely, when it comes to proper names of organizations such as “French75,” the translator opts for the calque approach in order not to lose the historical touch of the text. Other identified product models, such as “Hummingbird Whisperdoo 238” and “Dynamite Dolphin 335,” also follow this same model of calque: they try to keep the tone of absurdity in their original branding but at the same time ensure that the audience recognizes these are iterations of branded items.

## 4.2 Social Culture-Loaded Words

Social culture-loaded words in *One Battle After Another* are by far the most complex type of cultural item because these terms have deep roots in American history and political ideas, and popular culture. As summarized in Table 2, the translator generally adopts transposition and explicitation when facing these kinds of cultural symbols, the implementation of these formulas into the target text.

Table 2: Strategies of Social Culture-loaded Words

Example	Translation	Strategy
Tony Montana	疤面煞星	Transposition
White-bred	白人中产	Transposition
Socials	社保号码	Transposition

Example	Translation	Strategy
Josie and the Pussycats	犯罪姐妹	Explication
Bedford-Forrest Medal of Honor	贝德福荣誉奖章	Borrowing
Grand Wizard	三K党的大头目	Explication
Double Yankee White Inquisitions	纯血美国白人背景调查	Transposition, Explication
The Davos crowd	亿万富豪	Explication
Bell Curve Nazis	宣扬（种族）歧视者	Explication
Snap, Crackle, Pop	噼里啪啦计划	Transposition
Fred Flintstone	摩登原始人	Transposition
Arthur Fonzarelli	欢乐时光	Transposition
Operation Boot Heel	铁蹄行动	Transposition
Sisters of the Brave Beaver	勇敢海狸姐妹教堂	Calque, Explication

**Example:** These are the new names and socials. [00:27:48]

**Translation:** 这是你们的新名字和社保号码。(Here are your new name and social security numbers.)

The Fergusons must adopt new identities to evade arrest. Here, “socials” refers to Social Security Numbers (SSN), a core individual identifier in the American social system. The translator employs the transposition strategy, rendering it as “社保号码 (social security numbers),” a term highly familiar to Chinese audience. According to Nida’s Functional Equivalence Theory, this treatment pursues equivalence of deep meaning. In the American context, the SSN is the key tool for tracking personal credit and legal status; similarly, in the Chinese cultural context, “social security” is closely associated with government records and official identity. This transposition effectively bridges the cultural gap, enabling the target audience to instantly grasp the core meaning that the protagonists have obtained a set of convincing “fake identities” to start a new life. Therefore, it ensures a smooth viewing experience and achieves equivalence in audience response.

**Example:** This great, noble experiment in self-government. Bought and sold by billionaires. The Davos crowd. Openly racist, fucking Bell Curve Nazis. [00:44:45]

**Translation:** 我们伟大的民主共和政府被亿万富豪收买出卖，随意操纵。种族主义者肆无忌惮，宣扬歧视。(Our great democratic republic has been bought and sold by billionaires, manipulated at will. Racists run rampant, promoting discrimination.)

This scene features Howard Sommerville (a member of the French 75, code-named “Billy Goat”) delivering a revolutionary radio broadcast before his arrest. He asserts that American politics is a farce and that true democracy does not exist, urging the people to develop a spirit of struggle. The former refers to the world’s elite who gather at the Davos meeting, representing plutocratic capital while the second one refers to the controversial work *The Bell Curve* implying radical racism dressed up as science. “The Davos crowd” is fused with “billionaires,” while “BellCurve Nazis” is translated by explanatory free rendering. From the perspective of Nida’s Functional Equivalence Theory, what matters most here, however, is that we seek a similarity between effects on audiences and not necessarily an identity of form. Since the connotation of the classes implied by “Davos” and the racists meaning of “Bell Curve” are difficult to understand for Chinese viewers, a direct translation could cause an impasse of culture. To use such words as “billionaires” and “racist who openly advocates discrimination”, that the translator rendered well the critical attitude towards the global elites and the extremists in the source text. This makes sure that the intended audience can share the same feeling with the viewers of the original movie, thus fully understanding the speaker’s anger and criticism against the political turmoil at that time.

In conclusion, the translation of social culture-loaded words in this movie has achieved a high degree of functional equivalence. By utilizing transposition for common expressions like “socials,” the translator successfully triggers familiar mental images in the Chinese audience, achieving an equivalent psychological response to the original. In some other less obvious historical or political allusions, like “The Davos crowd,” explication is used to maintain transparency of a profound ideological critique within the technical limitations of subtitling. Other instances presented in the table, such as “White-bred,” “Grand Wizard,” and “Operation Boot Heel,” follow the same pattern of placing the emphasis on communicative effect rather than formal

correctness. Finally, these collaborative endeavors serve as a guide for the Chinese spectator to understand this film's thick social environment and achieve parity in response with the initial audience.

### 4.3 Religious Culture-Loaded Words

Religious culture-loaded words carry a strong sense of irony in the film. By using calques to retain widely recognized religious symbols (such as the “Golden Rule” in Table 3), the movie successfully communicates the critical attitude and the sense of hypocrisy in the original for its intended audience.

Table 3: Strategies of Religious Culture-loaded Words

Example	Translation	Strategy
Golden Rule	黄金法则	Calque
gentile	非犹太人	Calque

**Example:** We live by the Golden Rule, in a network of like-minded men and women dedicated to makin' the world safe and pure. [00:41:24]

**Translation:** 我们信奉黄金法则，目标是与志同道合的伙伴们一起，让世界变得更安全、更纯净。(We adhere to the Golden Rule, aiming to make the world safer and purer alongside like-minded partners.)

This line is spoken by the Deputy Director of Progress to persuade Lockjaw to join the Christmas Adventurers Club, based on the premise that “joining the Christmas Adventurers Club means that you are a superior man.” The “Golden Rule” originates from the Bible, referring to the universal moral precept of “treating others as you would like to be treated.” The translator utilizes calque, rendering it as “黄金法则 (the Golden Rule),” which serves as a cognitive equivalent in the Chinese context. While the “Golden Rule” symbolizes noble morality in the source culture, it is appropriated in the film by a far-right organization as a pretext to mask its attempts to enforce “racial purity.” This direct clash between two meanings clearly reveals the extreme hypocrisy of that group. By keeping such a moral sign with trans-culturally shared meaning, the translation invites the readership to look beyond the sacred veneer to reveal the ultimate self-interest and inhumanity lurking underneath. When confronted with the arrogant claims of those who style themselves as “superior beings,” Chinese audiences can experience the same intense sense of irony as the original film's audience, thus leading to a very strong sense of equivalence in terms of deep function.

**Example:** And you are American-born by gentile? [00:42:31]

**Translation:** 你是美国出生的非犹太人？(Were you born in America as a non-Jew?)

This scene again depicts Lockjaw during an interrogation by his superior, who needs to confirm the purity of his white lineage. The translator employs the calque strategy, rendering “gentile” as “非犹太人 (non-Jew).” This translation accurately captures both the referential function and the political metaphor of the source text. Considering the Christmas Adventurers Club's extreme pursuit of lineage “purity,” this translation can not be just an religious label, but actually it reveals the exclusionary racist essence of this organization. For the target audience, although the term “non-Jew” is not frequently used in the Chinese context, it effectively conveys a cold, rigid, and stereotyped sense of screening within this high-pressure background check scenario. Thus, allowing the viewers to feel the organization's pathological obsession with “purity.” This way the psychological reaction in the target audience is made to match that of the source audience, enabling them to understand in depth the logic of privilege that lies beneath the words and thus achieve an effective equivalence at a functional level.

The findings in this section suggest that religious culture-loaded words are mostly handled through calque to preserve the specific moral symbols that drive the film's irony. By retaining recognizable concepts like the “Golden Rule” or “gentile,” the subtitling helps to make the discrepancy between the far-right's self righteousness and action obvious for the target audience, which can help revive its original intention of revealing the hypocrisy of those characters in Chinese spectators' minds. As the symbolic charge of the words transfers quite well, the critical force of the source text is retained intact.

#### 4.4 Linguistic Culture-Loaded Words

As summarized in Table 4, the translation of linguistic culture-loaded words relies heavily on transposition, seeking idioms or slang familiar to Chinese audiences (such as “Cheek to jowl” or “Sitting on plastic”) to represent the emotional impact and humor of the original sentences.

Table 4: Strategies of Linguistic Culture-loaded Words

Example	Translation	Strategy
Cheek to jowl	前胸贴后背	Transposition
White chocolate	白巧克力	Calque
Udder buddy	孩子保姆	Explication
Rule of thumb	使用规则第一条	Transposition
Sitting on plastic	泥菩萨过河	Transposition
Wet’ n stinkies	臭烘烘的墨西哥人	Explication

**Example:** Motherfucker’s sittin’ on plastic in a container, he’s still got jokes. [00:48:12]

**Translation:** 他自己都是泥菩萨过河了，还不忘讲笑话。(He’s in deep water himself, yet he still finds time to crack jokes.)

In this scene, Lockjaw interrogates “Billy Goat” to find the location of the Fergusons. Despite the gravity of the situation, Billy Goat continues to mock Lockjaw with fake information. In criminal or military contexts, “plastic” typically refers to plastic explosives. Lockjaw uses this phrase to ridicule Billy Goat for joking while literally sitting on a “bomb” of trouble. The translator utilizes transposition, replacing the specific American cultural metaphor of “sitting on plastic” with the traditional Chinese idiom “泥菩萨过河 (a clay Buddha crossing a river),” which implies one is unable to even save oneself. From the point of view of Functional Equivalence Theory, this translation can be seen as an excellent case for dynamic equivalence since the picture suggested by “plastic” literally speaking is given up, that is, the real point about the character’s precarious situation is carried over well enough. Here is an obvious phrase for Chinese people who can immediately get it as sarcastic, which will also cause them similar psychological effects like the original audience did.

**Example:** This is a sanctuary city full of thousands of wet’ n stinkies. [00:49:45]

**Translation:** 这是一座庇护城市，到处是臭烘烘的墨西哥人。(This is a sanctuary city, full of stinky Mexicans.)

Lockjaw initiates a search operation in Baktan Cross, a sanctuary city that refuses to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. The term “wet’ n stinkies” is a racial slur derived from “wetback,” a derogatory reference to Mexican laborers who crossed the border illegally. The name is derived from a picture of workers with their backs wet from having crossed the river. By rendering the phrase as “臭烘烘的墨西哥人 (stinky Mexicans),” the translator manages to replicate the raw, xenophobic aggression found in the original dialogue. This ensures Lockjaw’s racism isn’t lost in translation, setting the stage for a jarring contrast with his fixation on Perfidia. It is this contrast that exposes him as a hypocrite, and a villain in the eyes of the audience. Thus, the Chinese audience can enjoy the same degree of character criticism as the original target audience and achieve functional equivalence through emotional effect instead of direct meaning.

In the translation of linguistic culture-loaded words it is sometimes more important to achieve a dynamic equivalence than follow the grammatical form. By means of transposition such as “sitting on plastic,” the translator substitutes for foreign metaphors some striking Chinese idioms, so far as to imitate in a measure the emotional effect of the originals, and their flavour of irony. For racial slurs such as “wet’n stinkies,” explication is used to keep attention on the aggressive personalities of the characters. Other lexical items, including the pun of “udderbuddy” and the idiom “ruleof thumb,” follow a similar functional logic. The translator aims at conveying the most salient meaning rapidly so as to make it easier for the target audience to keep up with, even as it maintains the stylistic energy of the story.

#### 5. Conclusion

On the basis of Functional Equivalence theory, this paper has made an analysis of how to translate cultural loaded words in *One Battle After Another* and put forward some suggestions for translating subtitles with

regard to function equivalence; namely, there is no fixed model or method when it comes to functional equivalence in the process of translation, but we can adopt some methods at a micro level:

First, for social and linguistic categories, transposition is the vital tool for achieving equivalence of response. By replacing foreign metaphors and institutional terms (e.g., “socials” or “cheek to jowl”) with familiar Chinese equivalents, the translator ensures that the target audience experiences a psychological impact and humor substantially consistent with the original audience.

Second, for religious and material categories, calque is used deliberately in order to preserve the critical intensity of the film. It preserves certain moral symbols (e.g., the “Golden Rule”) and historical labels (e.g., “French75”), the translation enables the reader to grasp the historical verisimilitude as well as the implied satire on the far-right’s hypocrisy, while retaining the text’s exotic allure.

Third, explicitation is the key to cognitive access in every category. Whether simplifying complex military abbreviations (e.g., “HMEs”) or clarifying implicit racial slurs, this strategy ensures narrative clarity within the technical constraints of subtitling, prioritizing the audience's immediate understanding of the character dynamics.

In conclusion, the Chinese translation of *One Battle After Another* demonstrates that functional equivalence does not mean translating literally from one language into another, and it is more like achieving the same communication effect. The combined application of translation strategies proves successful in conveying the complex socio-political subtext of the original work to a Chinese audience, ensuring that the target receptor experiences the message in substantially the same manner as the original receptor.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

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