

# Lyrics Translation from the Perspective of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of Maroon 5's Lyrics

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## Abstract

With the development of Internet technology and the exchanges between eastern and Western cultures, a multitude of English songs have won increasing popularity among Chinese audiences. Music has no national boundaries, thus happy rhythms and beautiful melodies can be enjoyed by people all over the world. However, due to the limited proficiency in English, some listeners cannot learn the essence of the song - the meaning of the lyrics. Therefore, lyrics translation is particularly necessary.

The thesis focuses on lyrics translation in order to promote the audience's aesthetic enjoyment of original English songs, help them better understand the feelings of a song that the songwriter intends to convey, and advance the cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the West. The thesis does this by conducting a case study of the translation of lyrics of Maroon 5, whose songs have prevailed in China. From the perspective of Skopos Theory, the thesis compares the different versions of the translated lyrics of Maroon 5 on NetEase Music and QQ Music, then sums up the main problems in current translations, such as mistranslation, unreadability and lack of aesthetic beauty, and finally puts forward effective translation steps and strategies to improve the quality of lyrics translation.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Thanks to the rapid development of Internet technology and cultural exchanges and mutual learning among the countries, a substantial number of foreign songs have been introduced into China. Among them, English songs are an integral part. In general, compared with most Chinese pop songs, the rhythms of English pop songs are livelier and more contagious. Thus, those English songs have quickly won popularity with Chinese audience, especially young people.

Although English songs have gained great popularity and significance in China, due to limited proficiency in English, a large number of audiences cannot understand the meaning of lyrics. In other words, they cannot accurately capture the emotion and thoughts conveyed by the singer, which I think is the cardinal part of a song. To cater for audiences' demand for lyrics translation, various Chinese music platforms including QQ Music and NetEase Music provide their translated lyrics. However, the quality of the translation is uneven, which can affect audiences' aesthetic experience, even damage the popularity of the original song. Therefore, audiences call for qualified translated lyrics.

At the same time, many people regard listening to English songs as not only a daily recreation but also an effective way to learn foreign language and culture. Thus, lyrics translation has played an increasingly integral role.

Originated in Los Angeles, California, Maroon 5 is an American pop rock band, consisting of lead vocalist Adam Levine and other six members. In June 2002, Maroon 5 released their debut album, *Song About Jane*. The album's lead single, *Harder to Breathe*, received heavy airplay, helping the album to debut at number seven on the Billboard 200 chart. More importantly, their songs, such as *Sugar*, *Maps*, *Animals* and *Moves Like Jagger* have gone viral in China and become indispensable songs in the Chinese audience's music players and popular background music in many shopping malls and online videos. With more than 120 songs, Maroon 5 provides plenty of resources for studying lyrics translation from the perspective of Skopos Theory.

## 1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of lyrics translation can be roughly divided into three categories: one is for English teaching, the other is for singing, and the third is for understanding the content of songs. The thesis focuses on the third one which is to help audience understand the feelings of English songs and convey the charm of the original lyrics.

As Xue Fan (2002) said, vocal music work is different from musical instrument work. Even if instrumental music work doesn't use "words", the musical ideas and musical images can be understood. But vocal music work, a combination of words and music, is different. Lyric is a key part of a song to give it a clear emotional direction and to understand and accept a song. If the lyrics are not translated into Chinese and the audience cannot understand the content of the lyrics accurately, the songs will not resonate with people. Thus, they will not release their complete aesthetic power either.

In addition, lyrics translation, just as subtitle translation, is a kind of pragmatic translation. However, it has not caught enough attention in the academic community. So far, the purpose of the lyrics translation has not been confirmed and the methods of lyrics translation hasn't been summarized clearly either.

Therefore, studying lyrics translation can help improve audiences' aesthetic experience and understand the emotion expressed by the songwriter and make up for the deficiency in lyrics translation in academic community. Besides, lyrics translation also serves as a bridge communicating Chinese and Western culture and promoting friendship between different peoples (Xue Fan, 2001), so it is of great importance to conduct further study on lyrics translation.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous Studies at Home on Lyrics Translation

According to a Chinese famous musician, professor Qian Renkang, China's lyrics translation can be traced back to the late Qing dynasty. After the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement, a large number of foreign songs were introduced into China, including school songs, revolutionary songs and religious songs etc. After the People's Republic of China was founded, the introduction and translation of foreign songs embraced a boom rarely seen before. During this period, the foundation of People's Music Publishing House and Shanghai Music Publishing House advanced the translation of lyrics of foreign songs. The two publishing houses published lots of albums of lyrics translation. In addition, some journals, such as *Broadcast Music Choice* (《广播歌选》) and *Songs* (《歌曲》) made great contributions to E-C lyrics translation.

In terms of translators, Xue Fan and Deng Yingyi are regarded as representatives.

*Подмосковные Вечера* (《莫斯科郊外的晚上》) translated by Xue Fan and *Ode an die Freude* (《欢乐颂》) and *Auld Lang Syne* (《友谊地久天长》) translated by Deng Yingyi remain very well-known today.

However, due to scanty research and study on lyrics translation, the Chinese theory and method of lyrics translation are in shortage. Thus, there is no widely-accepted standard of lyrics translation. Just as Weng Fengxiang (1999) said, from the macro perspective, no one in music community did in-depth research in theory of lyrics translation. Therefore, consensus of lyrics translation hasn't been reached.

Zhang Zhiqiang (1997) thought the principle of faithfulness, expressiveness and closeness summarized by Liu Chongde, which originally is applied to literary translation, also could be used in lyrics translation. The principle of closeness plays an integral part in E-C lyrics translation, helping the translator avoid the mistake of changing vulgarity into elegance. Besides, he proposed to translate song by song. Qian Renkang (1998) put forward that lyrics translation should comply with the rhythm of original tune. Xue Fan, an outstanding musicologist and translator published *Exploration and Practice in Translation of Song* in 2002, the first book with methodical study on song translation, covering the theory of rhythm, rhyme, tone, cultural discrepancy and so on (He & Chen, 2009). Since then, almost all studies in this regard have been conducted on former theoretical basis and no new systematic theory has been proposed.

However, the main purpose of the lyrics translation mentioned in the above theory is for singing, and the translated lyrics is required to conform to the original melody, so that it can be equipped with singability. Accurately, it should be called song translation. The lyrics translation which is used to convey the artistic charm of the original lyrics and help the audience understand the singers' thoughts and feelings seems easier than song translation, but actually it has less systematic theory.

In 1997, Zhang Zhiqiang proposed that the lyrics translation could mean translating the whole lyrics of a song, not for singing, but for reading and appreciation. When translating these lyrics, just like poem translation, we should strive to realize the diversity of vocabulary, sentence pattern, rhythm, sentiment and style of the original poem in the translation. In order to distinguish the song translation, Xue Fan (2002) also mentioned that the translation of lyrics should be "readable" and need to grasp the original meaning, image, language and structure of the original lyrics.

## 2.2 Previous Studies Abroad on Lyrics Translation

In the West, the scholars such as Spaeth, Dent, Peyser and Lewis, have done much of the work in this field.

Hewitt applied pop songs into teaching of poem and drama translation. Low (2003:91) "identifies five specific functions which a song-translation may serve, and proposes a range of five translation strategies intended to match these particular skopoi." In addition, Low (2008) took the three translated versions of lyrics of Franz Schubert's song as the example, put forward that in song translation, the rhyme of the translated song is not necessarily exactly the same as that of the original songs. The translator also should take into account the meaning, rhythm and singability. Sorby (2011) conducted a case study on the translation strategy of the translated lines in Western musicals, and analyzed the relevant methods that the translator should coordinate the acceptability of the audience, the difficulty of the actor's performance, and function of the translation in the target culture. Retzer (2016) created a teaching method of Spain language that renders students learn Spain while admiring the lyrics of love songs.

Besides, just like the thesis, some western scholars also conducted researches on songs and lyrics and their translated versions from the perspective of Skopos Theory. Ronnie Apter and

Mark Herman (2016:14) hold that “the translation should communicate to the target-language audience that the original work is worth its attention by revealing at least something of the special excellence of the original. This does not necessarily mean preserving the sounds of the words at all times, though it could mean creating word-music sounds that re-create the overall beauty and pleasure of the original, while also, if possible, re-creating some of the original’s word-music interactions.”

Therefore, it can be seen that the researches on song or lyrics translation at home and abroad are similar. Most of them come to the conclusion with theoretical exploration of song or lyrics translation, but few of them combine research with specific translated lyrics.

### **3. Skopos Theory**

#### **3.1 An Overview of Skopos Theory**

The Skopos Theory, proposed and developed by Vermeer, a German translator in 1978, is very crucial in functionalism. The word of “Skopos” comes from Greek and means “purpose” in English.

The purpose can be understood from three perspectives. First, it can mean translator’s purpose, such as, making money. Second, it can be explained as the communicative purpose of the translated work, for instance, enlightening readers. In addition, it also can indicate the purpose to be achieved by using a special translation strategy or procedure. Nevertheless, the term of Skopos usually refers to the purpose of the target (Nord, 1997:28). According to the Skopos Theory, all sorts of translations must comply with Skopos Rule and the purpose of translation determines the methods of translation. Therefore, before conducting translation practice, the translator has to decide his purpose.

Specifically, the Skopos Theory comprises Skopos Rule, Coherence Rule and Fidelity Rule.

#### **3.2 The Three Principles of Skopos Theory**

##### **3.2.1 Skopos Rule**

Among the three principles of Skopos Theory, Skopos rule is the fundamental one. That means the translation action depends on the purpose of translation. Each text has its purpose, both source text and its translated text should focus on its purpose. The Skopos rule can be interpreted as “translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function” (Nord,1997:29).

Translation action can serve for many purposes, but only one purpose is prime, which determines translation methods and strategies. For example, a poem delivers its emotion and artistic conception by its form, so the translator must put the original form into priority. However, when translating jingle, the information and conception of the products are more critical. Thus, translator should pay more attention to the information rather than form.

As the most important principles, the Skopos rule can assist to “solve the eternal dilemmas of free vs. faithful translation, dynamic vs. formal equivalence, good interpreter vs. slavish translator, and so on” (Nord,1997:29).

##### **3.2.2 Coherence Rule**

Coherence rule also can be called Intratextual Coherence Rule. In the light of this rule, the translated text must be intratextually coherent, namely, the translated text must be readable and acceptable. All texts are providers of information and function, and by implementing apposite methods and strategies, translator should make the translated text be a new provider of

information. During the language processing, the translator should make the translation acceptable and readable. Otherwise, the translated text cannot effectively convey information of the source text to the readers.

In conclusion, Vermeer believes that any text is “an offer of information from which each receiver selects the items they find interesting and important” (Nord,1997:31). “Translation as an offer of information is primarily dependent on the recipient’s situation (more specifically, the expectations regarding the recipient’s situation) and therefore, the target culture and language” (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014:74). Due to the differences between readers and writer in cultural backgrounds and linguistic habits, the Coherence Rule suggests that translators should “offer as much as information as they think is necessary in a form which they consider to be appropriate in view of the expectations of the target recipients vis-à-vis the translation of a particular source text” (Reiss & Vermeer 2014:114).

### **3.2.3 Fidelity Rule**

Fidelity Rule also can be called Intertextual Coherence Rule. The original text provides information to the translated text and this kind of relationship “depends both on the translator’s interpretation of the source text and on the translation *Skopos*” (Nord,1997:32). It is clear that the purpose of translation and translator’s interpretation play a key role in translation action. Therefore, Fidelity Rule does not refer to the imitation of the original text, instead, it requires to start from the purpose and be faithful to the core relationship between source text and translated text.

Under some circumstance, Fidelity Rule may be constrained by Skopos Rule and Coherence Rule. For example, when there is a severe conflict between purpose and form, translator will take some adaptive measures to serve for purpose.

## **3.3 Skopos of Lyrics Translation**

Lyrics translation is an action with purpose as well. Different purpose determines different standards and strategies. As Vermeer put it, the purpose can “help to determine whether the source text needs to be ‘translated’, ‘paraphrased’ or ‘re-edited’”(2000:231). Generally, current lyrics translation can be divided into three types from the perspective of purpose. First kind is for language teaching. Some audio and video products attach the lyrics and its translated version for language learning. More importantly, some key points, grammar rules and background knowledge are presented. Second one, also the most difficult one, is to make the translated lyrics can be sung with the original tune. It requires that translator must be equipped with not only professional language skills but also musical knowledge so that the translator can deal well with the rhythm. In order to keep the rhythm, sometimes, the lyrics translation will not be totally faithful to the contents of the source text. Xue Fan argues that “the number of the words in the translation should be consistent with the number of syllable in the original, and the function words can be given short shrift” (2002:11). However, nowadays, for most audience, their demands for lyrics translation is the third one. They hope to better understand feelings and thoughts conveyed by the song and improve artistic experience. Thus, the thesis focuses on this point, which determines strategy and methods of translation.

## **4. Case Analysis**

This chapter gives a brief introduction of Maroon 5, analyses the problems of lyrics translation on the two domestic music platforms from the perspective of Skopos Theory and proposes the steps and skills to solve the problems and improve the translation.

## 4.1 An Introduction of Maroon 5

Founded in Los Angeles, California in 1994, Maroon 5 is an American pop rock band, now comprising lead vocalist Adam Levine and other six members. Actually, at first, the band was named as Kara's Flowers consisting of Adam Levine, guitarist Jesse Carmichael, Bass player Mickey Madden and drummer Ryan Dusick, all of whom were high school students at that time. In 2001, as another guitarist James Valentine joined in, the name of the band was transformed into Maroon 5. In the latter years, another two partners joined in the team in succession.

However, the development of this rock band was not all plain sailing. During its early years, the members didn't make significant achievement except their first album *THE FOURTH WORLD* which only received underwhelming responses from the audience either. In June 2002, Maroon 5 released platinum record, *Song About Jane*. Fortunately, the album's lead single, *Harder to Breathe*, received heavy airplay in later years, helping the album to debut at number seven on the Billboard 200 chart in 2003. In 2007, with high sales of nearly 430000 copies in the first week of its album *It won't be soon before long*, Maroon 5 won the title in Billboard album list. On March 22nd, 2008, Maroon 5's 2008 World Tour Shanghai concert was staged in Shanghai International Gymnastics Center. From the first song of *Harder to Breathe* to the last song of *Any Little of Your Time*, Maroon 5 did not change their costume or show off too much skills, but presented their works in the most direct and pure way. In the years since then, Maroon 5 has won many awards and performed at the MTV Video Music Awards Ceremony and American Music Awards Ceremony. Furthermore, they attended Victoria's Secret Fashion Show as guest singer for several years.

More importantly, their songs, such as *Sugar*, *Maps*, *Animals* and *Moves Like Jagger* have gone viral in China. As for November in 2019, *Sugar* had been played more than 3 billion times. In 2015, Maroon 5 was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among all bands aboard and at home on Douban, a Chinese popular social media. Thus, it is clear that Maroon 5 holds a significant position in music circle and boasts a great number of fans in China.

## 4.2 Translation of Maroon 5's Lyrics: Problems and Solutions

With a comparison of translated lyrics of Maroon 5's songs on NetEase Music and QQ Music, this part respectively analyses the three major problems related to the Skopos Rule, Coherence Rule and Fidelity Rule and puts forward solutions to them accordingly.

### 4.2.1 Problems from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

This part compares the translated lyrics of Maroon 5's songs on NetEase Music and QQ Music based on the principle of Skopos Theory, so as to find out the problems in the translation of lyrics on these two large-scale music platforms. The translated lyrics on NetEase Music are contributed by netizens while the translated versions on QQ Music are mostly translated by staff of Tencent company, and Tencent company has the copyright.

#### 4.2.1.1. Problem Related to Skopos Rule: Lack of Aesthetic Beauty

The Skopos Rule is the foremost of the three principles of Skopos Theory, that is to say, like all actions, translation is goal-directed, it is determined by the Skopos. This thesis does not take singability as the purpose of lyrics translation. Instead, the thesis is oriented to help the audience understand the content of lyrics and the emotion of songs, and promote the aesthetic enjoyment. However, although the lyrics are not required to be used for singing, rhythm and rhyme should also be taken into consideration in the process of translation to ensure that the poetic beauty of lyrics can be reflected.

The first comparison is conducted on the translated lyrics of Maroon 5's latest song *Memories* on the two platforms. In *Memories*, the original lyric is "Everybody hurts sometimes, everybody

hurts someday”. The translated version of this sentence on NetEase Music is “每个人有时都会受伤，每个人都会受伤啊”. It is totally word-for-word translation which doesn’t pay attention to the feature of lyrics translation. According to Xue Fan (2001), lyrics, similar to poems (metrical poems), also need to follow the metrical rules. Therefore, translator needs to create artistic conception and express emotions in poetic language. While the translated version of the same content on QQ Music is “难过有时，悲伤有时，不必意外，皆是如此”. This kind of four-word pattern, fully demonstrating the poetic feature of the lyrics, is very rhythmic and improve the listener’s aesthetic experience.

In *Don’t Wanna Know*, the first line is “I don’t wanna know know know, who’s taking you home home home”. Obviously, the song-writer adopts the rhetoric of repetition and antithesis. Meanwhile, the vowel of “know” and “home” is /əʊ/ so that the two sentences sounds rhyming with each other. The translated lyrics on QQ Music is “我不想知道知道知道，谁会送你回家回家回家”，a completely word-for-word translation. The translated lyrics on NetEase Music is “我一丝一毫都不想知道，今夜谁将带你共赴春宵”. The discrepancy between the two version is much apparent. On the basis of retaining the meaning of the original lyrics, the translated lyrics on NetEase Music has been artistically polished, emphasizing the poetic beauty. The final word “晓” and “宵” rhyme with each other, make the translated lyrics catchier.

#### 4.2.1.2. Problem Related to Coherence Rule: Unreadability

Coherence Rule requires the translated lyrics to be readable and acceptable in the targeted language and culture. As Han (2017) said, when translating the English lyrics into Chinese, the discrepancy in way of thinking and cultural background between the songwriter and the audience should be taken into consideration. Thus, the translator should manage to use more native phrases and expressions so that the translated work can get closer to the Chinese listeners.

There is a very apposite example in *Wake Up Call*, which contains a lyric that “Six foot tall”. According to the context, we can know the lyric states a man’s height. On QQ Music, the translated version is “6 英尺的身高”. The translated version provided by Netizens on NetEase Music is “一米八高”. Both of them are correct. However, by comparison, it’s not hard to tell that the latter one is more appropriate in Chinese language and culture. Because for most Chinese people, they do not clearly know the length of one foot, let alone six foot, and they do not use “英尺” to describe one’s height either. Therefore, it is necessary for translator to change the unit of length into one that Chinese audience is familiar with. Such a small transformation can help the translated work get more accepted and readable for Chinese audience.

In Maroon 5’s *Memories*, the first two lines are “Here’s to the ones that we got. Cheers to the wish you were here but you’re not”. The translated version on NetEase Music is “举起杯，向我的愿望致意，我多希望你在，而你却不在身旁”. While the translated lyrics on QQ Music is “这一杯敬我们曾经的拥有，就为心底期待有你在的小小心愿干杯吧”. In terms of content, both of them have expressed the meaning of original lyrics completely, but the word “致意” translated by netizen on NetEase Music is merely suitable for written language or very formal occasion, which is seldom used in Chinese daily life. At the same time, the expression of “向我的愿望致意” is pronouncedly inconsistent with the Chinese expression habit, making the Chinese audience confused about what does it mean. However, the expression of “这一杯敬……”, provided by QQ Music, is definitely authentic Chinese expression and easier to be accepted by the audience, enhancing the readability of the translated lyrics.

#### 4.2.1.3. Problem Related to Fidelity Rule: Mistranslation

Fidelity Rule requires the translated content to conform to the original text, without mistranslation, omission, over translation, under translation and other errors. According to Chen and He (2009), when translating the lyrics, the translator shouldn’t ignore the content. If the

content of translated work is far deviated from the original lyrics, the process should be called creation rather than translation. Noticeably, the Fidelity Rule should comply with Skopos Rule and Coherence Rule.

In *payphone*, the original line is that “All of our bridges burned down”. As per the reference in *Oxford Dictionary*, burning one’s bridge means to do something that makes it impossible to return to the previous situation later. Netizens on NetEase Music translated it into “我们的一切都已崩塌”. On the basis of the whole lyrics, the song tells a story about that a boy and his girlfriend broke up and couldn't get back together. So the translated lyrics on QQ Music, namely, “我们没有回头路可走” is much better and more accurate. The translated lyrics on NetEase Music belongs to under-translation.

In China, the most popular song of Maroon 5 is *Sugar*. The lyrics has that “You got me begging begging”. The translated version of that on QQ Music is “你让我摇尾乞怜”, while the translated lyrics on NetEase Music is “你的石榴裙让我拜倒”. According to *Oxford Dictionary*, the word “beg” means to ask someone for something, especially in an anxious way because you want or need it very much. Chinese has an expression of “拜倒在石榴裙下”, which means the boy is completely attracted to the girl. In addition, in terms of the music video of *Sugar* and the whole story created by the songwriter, it is not hard to draw a conclusion that this song is a jocund love song with cheerful melody suitable for the weddings and embodies the boy’s deep love for the girl. However, “摇尾乞怜” will remind the audience of the dog. Though the *Oxford Dictionary* indicates that if a dog begs, it sits on its back legs with its front legs in the air, waiting to be given, it is obviously not suitable for this situation and does not comply with the atmosphere of this song. This mistake can be categorized into mistranslation.

In *Don't Wanna Go*, the original lines are “My friends are actin’ strange. They don’t bring up your name”. The translated lyrics on QQ Music is “我的朋友们都是那么的陌生，他们想不起你的名字” and that on NetEase Music is “我的朋友们都有所顾忌，在我面前从来不提及你”. According to *Oxford Dictionary*, the word of “strange” can be explained from the following two aspects. First, it means unusual or surprising, especially in a way that is difficult to understand, namely, “奇怪的”. Second, it means not familiar because you have not been there before or met the person before, namely “陌生的”. At the same time, “bring up something” or “bring something up” means to mention a subject or start to talk about it (提及), instead of thinking of it (想起). Therefore, the translated work on QQ Music is not faithful. The translated version of this sentence should be “我的朋友们行为奇怪，他们都不提你的名字” if we translate it word for word. Meanwhile, according to common sense, if we have a friend who broke up with his girlfriend recently, we will not mention the girl’s name in front of him to avoid hurting his feeling. Thus, the word of “顾忌” given by NetEase Music is very accurate here. Besides, it is clear that the translator has polished the translated lyrics to rhyme “忌” with “你” to make the lyrics catchier.

#### 4.2.2 Solutions to the Problems

This section presents some steps and strategies to solve the three types of problems mentioned above and to improve lyrics translation.

##### 4.2.2.1 Preparation Before Translation

Above all, the translator needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the original lyrics. The correct understanding of the original lays the foundation of translation. Before translating the lyrics, first of all, the translator should fully know the background of the song-writer so as to better understand the feelings he/she wants to convey. Second, the translator is required to grasp the context and story line of the original lyrics. When facing some expressions or slangs that are difficult to understand, the translator should look them up in the dictionary or authoritative corpus.



Do not start to translate until completely understand the entire song. Third, MV can be used for better understanding when encountering problems. These preparations can basically help the translator avoid the problem of mistranslation or inaccuracy related to Fidelity Rule.

In terms of the whole lyrics of *Cold*, we can know it tells a story that the girl has been very indifferent to her boyfriend and their relation has turned into cold. In this song, the original lyrics are “You gold dig everyday”. The translated version provided by netizens on NetEase Music is “你每天喋喋不休，算得精细”. While the translated lyrics on QQ Music is “每一天你都忙着钓金龟婿”. The two translated versions of the same lyric are totally disparate. By comparison, it is obvious that the problem lies in what does “gold dig” mean. By looking up in the *Collins Dictionary*, we can know the expression of “a gold digger” refers to a person who has a relationship with someone who is rich in order to get money or expensive things from them. In Chinese, we call the person “傍大款的人”. Here, the songwriter uses the verb form of this expression, but the connotation is the same, namely “傍大款”. “钓金龟婿” is a more vivid description in Chinese with the same meaning of “傍大款”. Thus, the translated lyrics on QQ Music are accurate. The mistake on NetEase Music is that “gold dig” is understood as “dig for gold” without verification. From this example, we can know the importance of accurate understanding of the original lyrics.

#### 4.2.2.2 During the Translation

Having fully understood the song and its background knowledge, the translator can start to translate now. During this process, the translator needs to minimize the exotic feelings in the target language and provide a natural, fluent and acceptable translation for the target language readers by adopting translation skills flexibly. According to Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer (2014), the source text must be translated functionally, taking the expectations of the target audience into account. This process is aimed at solving the problem of unreadability mentioned in Coherence Rule.

For example, in Maroon 5's *Payphone*, it has a line that “Still stuck in that time when we call it love”. The translation on NetEase Music is “我还停留在，我们称于爱的时光”. This is word for word translation. It is apparent that the expression of “我们称于爱的时光” is translationese, after all, no native Chinese will talk in this manner in daily life. The translated lyrics on QQ Music is “还沉浸在旧日美好的爱情时光”. The translator changes the order of the words to make the translated lyric more natural and acceptable in Chinese language.

#### 4.2.2.3 Refinement

Similar to poem translation, the lyrics translation also requires the translator to attach great importance to the rhythm and rhyme. Thus, after initial translation, the refinement part is of great significance for improving the poetic beauty and vitality of the translated lyrics. On the basis of the initial translation, the translation needs to polish his/her work by rhyming the lyrics, changing the number of words and creating poetic images.

In Maroon 5's *She Will Be Loved*, the first line is “Beauty queen of only eighteen”. The translation on QQ Music is “女神如她，却只有十八芳龄”. The translated lyrics on NetEase Music is “我的心上人美艳绝佳，芳龄只有十八”. Though both of the translated versions convey the same meaning, the latter one is catchier for “佳” rhymes with “八”. But if we revise the translation on QQ Music to “女神如她，芳龄十八”, it would be as catchy as the one on NetEase Music and much more concise.

In the song *Memories*, one line is “And the memories bring back, memories bring back you”. The translated lyric on NetEase Music is “回忆会让我想起，会让我想起你”. The translation is somehow plain without vitality and cannot reflect the poetic beauty of the original lyrics. It cannot promote the audience's aesthetic experience either. The translation on QQ Music is “往昔

回忆再次眼前浮现，勾起我对你的种种思念”。The translator utilizes the liberal translation method to make the lyrics more contagious and vivid. On the basis of mastering the original text, the translator artistically polished the translated lyrics, not only preserving the content of the original text and conveying the feelings of the song-writer, but also prioritizing the particularity of lyrics translation so as to promote the aesthetic experience of the audience.

From these two examples, we can clearly know the significant role that refinement plays in the lyrics translation.

## 5. Conclusion

The thesis discusses lyrics translation. On the basis of previous studies and Skopos Theory, a case study on translated lyrics of Maroon 5's song on QQ Music and NetEase Music is conducted. We first determine that the purpose of lyrics translation is to assist audience in better understanding the feelings delivered by the song-writer and promoting their aesthetic experience. The thesis analyzes the problems in lyrics translation from the perspective of Skopos Theory, namely, mistranslation, unreadability and lack of aesthetic beauty by comparing the diverse translated versions of lyrics on the two musical platforms. Finally, the thesis proposes some steps and strategies for lyrics translation.

The thesis is yet to be improved in many aspects. Because of the great number of lyrics, it is not possible to summarize and analyze the lyrics translation of all the songs, which may lead to an incomplete summary of problems, strategies and methods of lyrics translation. Also since the lyrics translation has not drawn much in academic community, previous studies on lyrics translation are limited. So the analysis and its connection with the theory may fail to be all-embracing in this thesis. All in all, more studies need to be conducted in this field in the future.

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