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## An overview of Chinese-Spanish audiovisual translation



Cinema is an important part of culture and, as such, it can become an essential source of a country's soft power. Therefore, audiovisual translation constitutes one of the main means of communication between cultures. This has been shown by the UAB research group TransMedia Catalonia, which has studied the reception of Chinese cinema in Spain since the 1970s to the present, to assess and analyze the image of the Chinese society built up through its cinema.

The number of Chinese films that reach a Spanish audience is scarce compared to productions coming out of other countries, especially the USA, but the position of Chinese cinematography is quite similar to that of other Asian film industries, like those from Japan or Korea, in terms of market share. However, limited as it may be, cinema is still a very powerful tool in bridging the gap between these two cultures.

The study by [TransMedia Catalonia](#) research group from the UAB aimed to offer an overview of the situation of Chinese cinema in Spain through audiovisual translation. In order to do so, a database of 500 Chinese films translated into Spanish was created. For each film, different types of information organized into three blocks were collected: firstly, data regarding the source film in Chinese; secondly, data on the translated film; and, finally, information about paratexts

related to the film in Chinese, Spanish and English. Through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data, the main trends in Chinese-Spanish audiovisual translation from the mid-1970s to 2017 have been traced.

The results obtained show that like other Western countries, Spain has been exposed to two main types of Chinese films: martial art films and dramas, the former coming especially from Hong Kong and the latter from the Mainland. Other genres, such as animation or comedies, are still scarce and it remains to be seen whether the situation will change in the future. The most prolific directors are Zhang Yimou, followed by other Fifth and Sixth generation figures from the Mainland, several Hongkongese martial art movie directors like Sammo Hung or Tsui Hark, and a couple of Taiwanese names, such as Ang Lee or Hou Hsiao-Hsien. However, even though the number of films and festivals that screen Chinese cinema has increased over time, the audience has not followed the same tendency. Another positive trend should also be noted, that is, the reduction of the time between the release of films in Chinese and in Spanish or Catalan, sometimes being released even the same year. Taking into account the number of viewers, the most successful films are all martial art movies first shown in the 1970s and 80s. One can conclude, then, that the image reflected by Chinese cinema in Spain is strongly related to martial arts and to a lesser extent to the historical and rural dramas directed by Zhang Yimou. Therefore, the works that reach the Spanish market portray an oversimplified image of Chinese culture, since they draw the audience's attention to given historical periods and cultural practices, which fail to give an overview of China's true diversity and may reinforce existing prejudices about the Chinese.

Even though audiovisual translation is a crucial element in the introduction of Chinese films to a Spanish audience, this research has revealed that there is almost a complete lack of information as to the translators, the translation process, and translation modality (subtitling or dubbing). In our opinion this topic deserves more attention in order to analyze its possible impact on quality and, in turn, on reception, since such factors may affect the opinion the Spanish audience has of Chinese cinema.

This study aimed at filling the gap with regard to research in audiovisual translation as an intercultural exchange between China and Spain but, since the film industry is dynamic and every year there are new releases of Chinese films in Spain, our database will continue to grow with new entries and new information so that we can keep on offering an updated picture of Chinese cinema in Spain. Meanwhile, many important questions remain unanswered and should serve as a focus for future research. On the one hand, it would be interesting to further analyze different aspects of reception, starting with the audience profile, but also delving into the translation process. On the other hand, the diversification and characteristics of screening channels through which Chinese films are now consumed by the Spanish audience should be researched in more detail. In this regard, the open access database is a project that is constantly growing and that will allow us to keep on researching on the evolution of Chinese cinema in Spain in the future.

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## References

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