

Research on Subtitle Translation Strategies of Culture-Specific Items Under the Theory of Communicative Translation: A Case Study of White Snake

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Abstract: The development of globalization has promoted the exchange of films from different countries, and Chinese films have increasingly entered the international market. However, due to language barriers, most foreign audiences still need to use subtitles to understand the content of movies, and the role of subtitle translation is self-evident. On the other hand, in order for external audiences to bridge the gap between Chinese and Western languages and cultural differences, and to correctly understand the content of the film, it is necessary to improve the translation quality of culture-specific items in the subtitles. Build on previous studies, this article discusses the principles of Chinese film subtitle translation and subtitle translation strategies, such as economic benefit strategies, equivalent strategies, etc., starting from Newmark's communicative translation theory. The analysis in this article can serve as a reference for the translation strategy of culture-specific items in subtitles.

Keywords: Communicative translation; Culture-specific item; Subtitle translation

Based on the study and analysis of the communicative translation theories and culture-specific items in subtitles in the first three chapters, this chapter will take White Snake as the research object and specifically analyze the strategies of culture-specific items in this film. There are two major strategies: strategies for economic benefit and strategies for equivalent effect.

1. Strategy for Economic Benefit

Economic strategy refers to the simplification of some content in the film subtitles, which can not only solve the problems caused by the length of the film, but also convey the content of the original text to the audience. According to the characteristics of film subtitles, the limitations and diversity of discourse, it is necessary to examine the total length of subtitles and the characteristics of various texts, so as to compress and extract part of the information. In addition, one of the principles of communicative translation, the principle of emphasizing communicative effect, requires translators to take communicative effect into consideration, that is, subtitle translation should not only be simplified, but also serve as understood by the audience. On this basis, combined with the characteristics of subtitles and the principle of emphasizing the communicative effect, the corresponding economic strategies are put forward. The economic translation strategy here mainly refers to omission and simplification, including omission of repeated content and auxiliary verbs, and the use of simple syntactic structure and vocabulary, so that the translation is smooth and concise, in line with the customary English expression.

In the subtitles, there will be some translation that makes the translator get into trouble due to cultural differences. If the word does not affect the plot direction, the translator can choose to omit the translation. In subtitles, the use of provincial translation can not only avoid the translation of things or concepts unfamiliar to the audience, but also avoid annotation, which ensures the simplicity of subtitles.

Example 1

ST(Sorce Text):--Ahua jie, neng ba na ge xiong huang jiu di xia lai ma?

--Zhe ge jiu hao, xiong huang liao yong de zu.

TT(Target Text):--Hua, can you lower that wine down?

--Sure,it's the good stuff too!Keep the snakes away!

In this case,drinking“xiong huang jiu”to drive away snakes is a traditional custom of the Dragon Boat Festival in China.If the word“xiong huang jiu”is literally translated into“realgar wine”,a commentary must be added to help the audience understand its use. The translator chose to omit the“xiong huang jiu”here without translating it.The following text adds that this wine has the function of repelling snakes.The translator adopts this translation method,cleverly avoiding the trap of being difficult to translate without annotations,achieving the simplicity and understanding required by economic strategies,making the translation smooth and easy to understand.

Simplification refers to the use of simple grammatical structures and vocabulary,in order to compress and simplify the irrelevant information,highlight the most important information,and make the subtitles easier for the audience to understand.As the screen changes,the subtitles change so quickly that the audience barely has time to read.In addition,the audience for this film is very wide,from the old to the young,from the male to the female,and their educational level is different.In order to allow different audiences to understand subtitles in a limited time,simple grammatical structures and vocabulary are useful and appropriate.

Example 2

ST:Suo yi wo jiu shen me dou xue xue,yi bu xing xian,qi men dun jia,wu xing ba gua,shen me dou hui dian.

TT:That's why I study everything:medicine,the stars,along with the esoteric arts.

“Yi gua xing xiang”is a professional type in ancient China,which represents doctors,wizards,astrologers and astrologers.“Qi men dun jia”is an ancient Chinese work of art and mathematics.Its essence is just an advanced astrophysics,which reveals the interaction between the eight planets of the solar system and the earth's magnetic field.“Wu xing ba gua”are divided into Yin Yang Theory.It is the basic philosophical concept of the ancient Han nation and the theory of Yin and Yang in ancient time.“Wu xing”specifically refers to the practice of gold,wood,water,fire and earth.It has always been the tool and method for the ancient Chinese sages to engage in all kinds of research.No matter Taoists,doctors,military strategists,Confucians,historians,scholars of various schools,and calendar strategists,they must be proficient in the“Wu xing”.“Yi bu xing xiang”,as well as“qi men dun jia”and“wu xing ba gua”,are all profound and complicated theories of ancient China,which are very difficult to understand for Chinese people,let alone for Western audiences.Therefore,there is no need to translate the specific connotation of these theories into subtitles.“Esoteric Arts”can be used to summarize these contents,which is concise and easy to understand.

2. Strategy for Equivalent Effect

Equivalent effect strategy refers to the reconstruction of equivalent effect to make the target audience feel the same as the original audience,which is the main viewpoint of communicative translation.It is well known that each film reflects the culture and history as well as the social and cultural life of a region.And each language also contains information about many countries'cultures.Cultural information includes values,ways in which of thinking,spiritual beliefs,customs,etc.,which may be expressed within the form of idioms,allusions,sayings and so on.These words contain certain cultural information in cinematic dialogue,i.e.culture-specific words that may be unknown and unfamiliar to the target audience.Unlike other types of translation,subtitles are the language of the characters in the film,so they are very easy to understand.In the process of subtitle translation,we should not translate rigid subtitles,but should be colloquial,life-oriented,in order to achieve the equivalent effect.In order to form the audience have a similar feeling as the original audience,that is,achieve an equivalent impact.

Example 3

ST:Zhe zhu chai ben fei ni suo you,ling you zhu ren.

TT:This hairpin belonged to another owner if I recall correctly.

“Zhu chai”is a unique hair ornaments in ancient China.It is beautifully made,and has a wide variety,such as“ji,zan,bu yao”,etc.“Zhu chai”is a kind of jewelry with Chinese characteristics.Its function is to fix the hair to make a beautiful hairstyle,which has the same function as the hairpin.Therefore,the translation of“zhu chai”into“hairpin”is more helpful for the Western audience to understand the function of this article.

Example 4

ST:Ta zao bu zhi he guo duo shao hui meng po tang.

TT:He's already lived through so many lifetimes.

The“meng po tang”in this example is also due to differences of“reincarnation”in Chinese and Western religious cultures,so if the literal translation is used here,the audience will have doubts about what“Mengpo Soup”is.The translator chose to paraphrase this sentence to avoid confusion to the audience caused by the cultural differences between China and the West.

Domesticated translation is to break through the form restrictions of the source language on the translator and make use of the familiar language habits of the target audience to give a concise explanation of the source language. It is to tell Chinese stories and introduce Chinese culture in a language or way of thinking that conforms to English speaking countries. It takes the target language as the guidance, expresses the target language culture to the maximum extent, and makes it easier for the target language audience to understand and adapt to the target language text. From the cultural point of view, domestication is to use the culture of the target language to replace or describe the unique culture of China. Methods such as translation can be used specifically.

Based on the analysis of specific examples, the author summarizes two translation strategies: strategy for economic benefit and strategy for equivalent effect. These two strategies are applicable to the translation of culture-specific items, which can economically and effectively convey film information and emotion to the target audience, so that the target audience can get the same perception as the local audience.

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