The Effect of Internet Memes on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words in the Captions of American Dramas

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Abstract: Globalization and the rapid development of network technology have enabled film and television works to contribute significantly to cultural exchange between nations. In contemporary China, American dramas have become a vital form of understanding Western culture and are generally welcomed by the general audience. Subtitles play a crucial role in American drama dissemination. Culture-loaded words contain cultural information and color and combine conceptual and associative meanings. In recent years, domestic scholars have paid more attention to caption translation. However, there are few studies on the influence of internet memes on the translation of culture-loaded words in subtitles. Therefore, this paper investigates the influence of internet memes on caption translation. Taking the captions of a large number of American dramas as an example, this paper discusses the impact of internet memes on the translation of loaded words. It takes into account the characteristics of movie subtitle translation to find an appropriate translation method for culturally loaded words.

Keywords: Internet memes; Culture-loaded words; Captions

1. Culture-loaded Words in American Dramas under Network Meme and the Current Situation of Captions Translation

1.1 Internet memes

The meme is derived from the Greek word meme, which refers to something that is imitated. It is based on the biological term gene (gene) imitation. Like genes, modes are in constant replication and reproduced and spread through heredity. Antonini, R.(2005) suggests that a meme is any artificial information that appears on the Internet and is imitated by numerous communication actors, remixed and rapidly diffused to produce numerous derivatives, while Teng, H.(2022) summarizes a meme as relatively complex and multi-layered, inter-textual combinations of images and text that are actively disseminated by Internet users and are popular among them. Network memes are intentionally created, disseminated online by multiple participants, and share common characteristics of digital information. There is a strong association between the dissemination, replication, and diffusion of network memes, regardless of the viewpoint from which scholars view them. Basically, "information and diffusion" are the common denominators. Netizens create most internet memes, bringing rich connotations to the language through their expression. They give full play to simplicity, clarity, and humor. Compared to traditional languages, internet languages are more popular and timely. Once identified in a particular time period or situation, internet memes can spread rapidly. Therefore, Internet memes can also be considered as a translation strategy to enhance the audience's understanding of the humor and connotation of a film or television production.

1.2 Culture-loaded words

Culture-loaded words, Words with a cultural context, such as proverbs, special names of people, etc., are known as "culture-loaded words", also known as "culturally rich words" or "culture-specific words". A certain historical stage precipitated the

emergence of these terms, as well as current idioms and words (Teng, H.,2022). America's cultural life is vividly and richly displayed in American dramas, which is expressed in American dramas' line subtitles. Subtitles are an important tool for understanding American drama culture. It requires that the translator takes into account both linguistic meaning and context information. It is especially critical to faithfully convey semantic information while accurately understanding the language's beliefs, customs, aesthetics, and values.

1.3 The translation of culture-loaded words under internet memes

In recent years, with the rapid development of the Internet, the rapid spread of Internet buzzwords and popular Internet stems has affected the translation of culture-loaded words in American dramas. Teng, H. (2022) defines caption translation as the process of providing simultaneous descriptions of dialogue in a film or television program. This means translating the spoken language of a film or television program (the source language) in written form into the viewer's country language (the target language). The translated text appears at the bottom of the screen alongside the source language dialogue or narration. In addition to the rapid development of the current network, the culturally loaded words have new meanings and connotations in addition to their original culturally specific meanings. This requires subtitle translation not only to be accurate and vivid but also to clearly express the connotation of the network pop culture it carries. Therefore, it is crucial to study the impact of internet memes on subtitle translation in American dramas.

2. The impact of Internet Memes on the Translation of Culture-loaded Words in American Dramas

In the process of internet meme creation and development, their unique popularity and topicality accurately reflect the hot issues of the day. The popular, concise, lively, and interesting nature of internet buzzwords easily resonates with viewers and is also in line with the spoken, popular, and concise nature of caption translation for film and television productions (Amirian, Z., Dameneh, S. S., 2014). Since the translation of subtitles for film and television works needs to be based on the preferences of the audience, it is a good choice to include internet memes in them, especially in comedies, where they can be useful. The extensive use of internet buzzwords in subtitle translations mainly reflects the use of the naturalization method.

One major trend in online humor is multi-modality (Milner, R. M., 2013). Humorous internet texts usually blend linguistic and other semiotic elements. Internet memes have received increasing attention due to their widespread use across digital platforms. Based on the author's experience of watching American dramas and the results of the questionnaires returned, it can be seen that the problems in translating culturally loaded words in American dramas can be summarized in two aspects: on the one hand, in terms of comprehension, the viewers cannot accurately understand the exact meaning in the subtitles of American dramas, and thus cannot understand the implied meaning behind the lines. This is partly because some English words carry cultural information that has no "counterparts" or "equivalents" in Chinese. A large part of the reason is that some translators do not realize that subtitle words are culturally loaded words. The subtitler's translation clearly shows the translator's misunderstanding of this culturally loaded term (Teng, H., Lo, C.-F., 2022).

In terms of expression, The English culture-specific vocabulary contains distinctly Western cultural features, but the viewer's understanding of subtitle information and content is dependent on his or her Chinese cultural environment. In the meantime, many internet memes in America are unique. For example, in the American drama "The Six", there is a line "The fellow is a tiger", and the subtitle team adopts the direct translation method, translating it as "That fellow is a tiger". Because "tiger" represents "ferocity" in English culture, but "bravery and might" in Chinese culture, as in "Tiger Power." It can also indicate "greedy and fierce," as in "tiger eyes." As a result, the audience is unsure whether the translation of "that guy is a tiger" praises his "might" or denotes his "greed" or "viciousness." As a result, in the context of the story and the characteristics of the characters, the metaphor can be translated into "as ferocious as a tiger," allowing viewers to understand the precise meaning of the metaphor in the original text.

3. Translation Methods for Culture-loaded Words under the Internet Memes

Direct translation, paraphrasing, phonetic translation, and interpretive translation are all techniques of translation. As per network modality theory, its language is distinguished by humor, high positive affective intensities, and high interactivity. We should not only retain the cultural information contained in the original text, the popular backdrop of the network, stimulate the audience's curiosity and desire for knowledge about the foreign culture, but also fully understand the cultural cognitive environment of the viewers, in order to achieve the communication goal of accurately conveying Western culture and values.

We need to adopt more explanatory translations. More explanatory explanations are required. In the American drama "House of Cards", for example, the line "to eat no fish" literally means "not to eat fish." It has a new meaning on social media platforms and online media to indicate devotion to something, so "to consume no fish" means "loyalty." The translation of "loyalty" suits the context of the story and deviates significantly from the literal meaning of the idiom "to consume no fish." In the subtitles of many American dramas, there will be bracketed text or small colored words appearing at the top of the screen. This is to further elaborate or annotate the content of the lines at the bottom of the screen to help viewers obtain more background information. Davison, P. (2012) defines interpretive translation as "a translation technique in which extra details not clearly communicated in the source language are expressed and explained in the target language text." Given the limited screen area, annotations are typically reserved for culturally loaded words that must be clearly conveyed to viewers. At the same time, we should remember that another feature of network modality is powerful interactivity, so we use a more interactive sentence structure to translate culturally loaded words and pay attention to the statement's humor.

4. Conclusion

Language and society are inextricably linked. Culture cannot be completely expressed without language. Therefore, translators must be culturally informed and sensitive. They must strive to perfectly express the cultural connotation while also completely comprehending the culture-loaded words. Translators need specific information about internet memes in American society. Since the subtitles of the play are presented rapidly, the explanatory text will surely increase the length of the subtitles, the space of the subtitles is limited, and the scope of the viewer's visual reading is even more limited, so dealing with culture-loaded words through explanatory notes can help the viewer's understanding of the origin of the foreign internet memes, but the length of the subtitles and the scope of the viewer's visual reading are both limited. Because of the complexity and specificity of internet memes, as well as the unique context of the characters' dialogues in movies and TV dramas, the translation of culture-loaded words in captions must be flexible and adaptable, selecting the appropriate translation method based on the communicative purpose and the significance of the cultural information in the original text, with the goal of transmitting information, not only not contradicting the intention of the orator.

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