

Movie Subtitle Translation from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology-Exemplified by the Three-Dimensional Transformation Translation Method

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Abstract. Movies play a crucial role in cultural dissemination. On today's world cultural stage, the translation of movie subtitles is of great significance for a movie to break into the international market. In the process of creating an ecological balance for film subtitle translation, the theory of Eco-Translatology exerts a constructive effect. This paper, from the perspective of Eco-Translatology and in combination with the example of movie subtitles, elaborately introduces the three-dimensional transformation translation method therein. This paper aims to analyze the three-dimensional transformation theory applied in movie subtitle translation by means of literature review and based on the summary of previous studies. This paper finds that, based on the theory of Eco-Translatology, only by rationally applying the three-dimensional transformation translation method can an ecological balance in translation be achieved. Moreover, the use of three-dimensional transformation translation method provides new action guidelines and theoretical support for the translation of film subtitles and other literary works.

Keywords: Eco-Translatology, Three-dimensional Transformation, Subtitle Translation

1. Introduction

With the in-depth development of economic globalization, cultural dissemination has gradually demonstrated an important position [1]. With its narrative features and visual art forms, movie integrates cultural significance and cultural representation, thus becoming the best carrier of cultural communication [2]. As an important part of movies, movie subtitles are not only the direct expression of language dialogue, but also the transmission and interpretation of images and sounds [3]. In order to present the multicultural elements of movies in a limited time and space, the quality of translation directly affects the audience's understanding and feelings of movies. Therefore, movie subtitle translation has become an important research field. The theory of Eco-Translatology, especially the three-dimensional transformation theory within it, plays a constructive role in guiding the translation of movie subtitles [4]. However, the general public has limited knowledge of Eco-Translatology and uses it less frequently when studying translation texts.

This paper aims to summarize the relevant theoretical research of predecessors and introduce the three-dimensional transformation translation method in Eco-Translatology with specific examples of film subtitle translation. Using theoretical analysis and case study, this paper first puts forward overviews of movie subtitle translation and Eco-Translatology respectively and then selects representative movie subtitles to study transformation application and effects. It is hoped that through this research, multi-dimensional translation methods can be provided for film subtitle translation and theoretical support can be offered for cross-cultural communication at the same time.

2. An overview of movie subtitle translation

Nowadays, Movies have become an important component of a country’s cultural strength. To enhance the cultural influence of a movie, the translation of movie subtitles plays a very important role. Accurate subtitle translation enables the audience to smoothly navigate through the world of the plot without any obstacles [5]. Subtitle translation has many features, such as conciseness, natural, smooth logic, precise restoration and so on. However, under the guidance of different translation methods, the word choice and style of subtitle translation will vary. At the same time, the use of different translation theories will also have an impact on the translated subtitles. This paper seeks to summarize a newly proposed translation method to provide more theoretical support for subtitle translation.

3. An overview of Eco-Translatology

Eco-Translatology was put forward by Hu Gengshen in 2001 and its theoretical basis is Darwin's theory of evolution-natural selection and survival of the fittest [6]. Focusing on the integrity of the translation ecosystem, Eco-Translatology provides a new description and explanation of the essence, process, standards, principles and methods of translation. Adaptation and choice are the core concepts of Eco-Translatology, which briefly summarizes translation methods into three dimensions, namely, linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension, as shown in Figure 1.

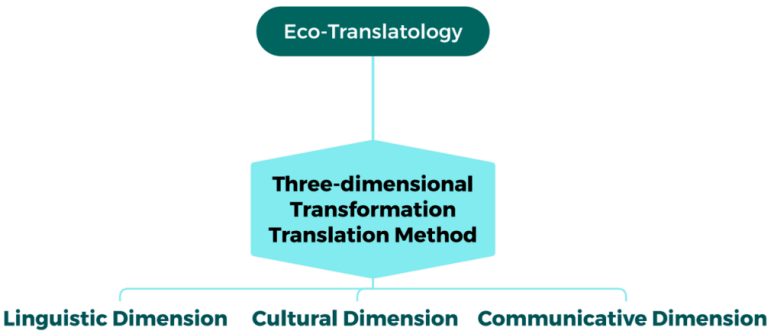


Figure 1. The structure of the three-dimensional transformation translation method

Linguistic dimension pays attention to the flexible adjustment of language forms in transformation, such as part-of-speech transformation and sentence pattern reconstruction; Cultural dimension focuses on resolving the cultural differences between the source language and the target language and ensuring the accurate communication and appropriate adjustment of cultural elements; Communicative dimension focuses on the faithful reproduction of the communicative intention of the original text in the target text, ensuring that the target text can arouse similar responses to the

original readers and achieve the purpose of cross-cultural communication [7]. Eco-Translatology and the three-dimensional transformation translation method within it provide a translation ecological environment that can better and comprehensively evaluate the translation quality and effect of film subtitles. This paper will focus on the three-dimensional transformation translation method and provide a detailed introduction by combining examples of movie subtitle translation.

4. Subtitle translation of movies under the guidance of three-dimensional transformation translation methods

Eco-Translatology is developed on the basis of the theory of translation adaptation and choice and its core viewpoints are "ecological environment of translation", "translator-centered", "adaptation and choice", "three-dimensional transformation" and "harmonious unity of ecosystem" [8]. Among them, three-dimensional transformation, as a translation method of Eco-Translatology, holds a rather significant position.

4.1. Transformation of linguistic dimension

Transformation of linguistic dimension is the translator's adaptive transformation of language form in the process of translation [9]. From the dimension of linguistics, the translator's adaptive transformation of language forms in the process of translation reflects his or her adaptation to the differences between source language and target language [10]. When it is difficult to find words in the target language that are exactly the same as those in the source language, the translator needs to grasp their actual meanings in the source language during translation and then choose the appropriate target language for transformation. For example, Chinese and English belong to different language families and there are differences in language form, language logic and language habits. In the process of translation, translators must take these linguistic-level factors into account in order to achieve a balance in the translation ecosystem. The following examples would concretize the concept of transformation of the linguistic dimension.

Example 1:

Film Title: Forrest Gump

Source language: Life was like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get.

Target language: 生活就像一盒巧克力，你永远不知道下一块是什么味道。

Analysis: In the English phrase "you never know what you're gonna get", "what you're gonna get" is an object clause, serving as the object of the verb "know". The Chinese phrase "你永远不知道下一块是什么味道(You'll never know what the taste of the next piece is)" transforms the object clause into a declarative sentence structure of "interrogative word + predicate+ object", which is more in line with Chinese expression habits. What's more, in this example, the translator specifically translates "what you're gonna get" as "What's the taste of the next piece", transforming the abstract "what to get" into a more concrete description, making it easier for the audience to understand Forrest Gump's perception of the uncertainty of life. A transformation from abstract to the concrete has been carried out in the linguistic dimension to adapt to the understanding mode of Chinese audiences.

Example 2:

Film Title: The Shawshank Redemption

Source language: Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.

Target language: 希望是美好的，也许是人间至善，而美好的事物永不消逝。

Analysis: The translator translated “maybe the best of things” as “也许是人间至善(perhaps it is the greatest good in the world)”, using a more literary and infectious Chinese expression to convey the preciousness and beauty of hope [11]. Meanwhile, the word order was adjusted to make the translation more in line with the expression habits of Chinese, improving the quality of the translation in the linguistic dimension and enabling the audience to better appreciate the profound theme conveyed by the film.

When applying the transformation of the linguistic dimension, many translators focus on the transformation of the language structure between English and Chinese [4,10]. English commonly uses connections or clauses in various forms and pays attention to expressing meaning by form. As for Chinese, it is often necessary to analyze its grammatical meaning and logical relationship in combination with the context. In that case, when translating English into Chinese, translators need to analyze the structure and form of sentences first, so as to determine the meaning of sentences [12]. In this way, the transformation of the linguistic dimension can be achieved.

4.2. Transformation of cultural dimension

According to Eco-Translatology, translators should have a keen insight into the expression of the cultural characteristics of the source language and integrate them into the cultural context of the target language while retaining the unique charm of the source language culture, so as to avoid cultural barriers and promote cultural exchange and integration [5]. Due to different national conditions, the customs, living habits and cultural backgrounds of different countries are also different. If cultural differences are ignored in the translation of movie subtitles and literal translation is adopted, it will cause misunderstanding and ambiguity. In order to achieve harmony at the cultural level, the translator needs to comprehensively consider the whole cultural system closely related to the source language and strive to achieve the accurate connection and natural presentation of the translation at the cultural level [10]. The following examples will elaborate in detail on how to apply the transformation of the cultural dimension.

Example 3:

Film Title: Ne Zha: The Demon Child Stirs Sea

Source language: 急急如律令。

Target language: Be quick to obey my command.

Analysis: The phrase “急急如律令(Be quick to obey my command)” originated from a Taoist incantation. Using the metaphor of the authority of laws and theocracy in the Han Dynasty, it has the characteristics of religious rituals. “Be quick to obey my command” replaces the “theocratic metaphor” with “secular instructions”, transforms the religious logic into the western thinking of “action obedience”. This way of transformation abandons the rhythm and pursues functional equivalence, achieving cross-cultural conceptual adaptation.

Example 4:

Film Title: Zootopia

Source language: It's called a hustle, sweetheart.

Target language: 这叫套路，小可爱。

Analysis: Replacing "hustle" with the Chinese Internet buzzword "套路" precisely conveys the underlying message of "deceptive means", which is in line with the language habits of young audiences. "Sweetheart" is translated as "little cutie" rather than "dear", which is more in line with the affectionate and teasing tone of Chinese and enhances the cynical sense of humor of the fox Nick. By adjusting the localized vocabulary and tone, it not only retains the ironic connotation of the

original lines but also enables Chinese audiences to instantly understand, achieving a seamless transformation in the cultural dimension.

It can be known from the above examples that in the process of translation, translators should pay attention to the differences in content and nature between source culture and target culture and preserve the quintessence through some translation methods, so as to promote the communication between different cultures to the greatest extent [13]. Only when harmony in the cultural dimension is achieved can the cultural communication effect of the film be realized.

4.3. Transformation of communicative dimension

In addition to the linguistic dimension and the cultural dimension, the communication dimension is also an important component of the three-dimensional transformation theory. Whether it is for information transmission, emotional expression or appeal, the meaning should be clearly presented in the target text through appropriate language means and translation skills, so as to establish an effective communication bridge between the target text and the target readers, enabling translation to be a powerful tool of cross-cultural communication [5]. During the transformation of the communicative dimension, the translator should focus on whether the translation can achieve the purpose of communication and at the same time, factors such as cultural background and language habits should be taken into consideration. Being different from the cultural dimension, the communicative dimension focuses on the conveyance of communication intentions to ensure that readers understand the core information and the purpose of communication. The following are examples involving the transformation of the communicative dimension.

Example 5:

Film Title: Despicable Me

Source language: It's so fluffy I'm gonna die!

Target language: 萌死我啦!

Analysis: If translated "It's so fluffy I'm gonna die!" literally as "它太毛茸茸了，我要死了！(It's too furry. I'm dying.)", it would seem strange in Chinese because "dying" usually expresses negative emotions. The version of 萌死我啦!(It's cute to death!) replaces "fluffy" with "萌(Meng)", which not only retains the core meaning of "cute" but also conforms to the usage habits of Chinese Internet language. The word "death" maintains the exaggerated tone of the original sentence, but the combination of "cute to death" dissolves the negative association, which is more in line with the innocent and carefree way of speaking of the speaker- a little girl. This translation not only conveys the excitement of the character but also adapts to the Chinese cultural context, serving as a model of flexible transformation of the communicative dimension.

Example 6:

Film Title: The Devil Wears Prada

Source language: I'm just one stomach flu away from my goal weight.

Target language: 再病一场我就能瘦成闪电。

Analysis: Stomach flu is a common disease in the West but directly mentioning it in Chinese is likely to trigger associations of physical discomfort. Translating it as "再病一场(Fall ill again)" weakens the name of the specific disease, but retains the logic that "illness leads to weight loss". However, the concept of "goal weight" lacks impact in Chinese. Borrowing the popular Chinese Internet phrase "瘦成闪电(Slim to a flash of lightning)", it has a playful touch. The image of "lightning" implicitly satirizes the fact that being slim has become an aesthetic in the fashion circle. This way of translation achieved an acute effect of exposing the distorted body anxiety in the fashion industry.

It can be seen from the above examples that in the dimension of communicative transformation, translators usually adopt the method of free translation rather than literal translation in order to better convey the meaning of the text. Language is a tool for communication. When translating subtitles, the translator needs to accurately grasp the tone and emotion of the characters and choose appropriate vocabulary and expressions, so that the translation can accurately convey the tone and emotion of the original text [5].

5. Conclusion

This paper starts from the perspective of Eco-Translatology and conducts a detailed analysis of movie subtitle translation under the guidance of the three-dimensional transformation translation method. Meanwhile, through this research, a more comprehensive theoretical basis has been provided for the translation of movie subtitles. The three-dimensional transformation translation method standardizes translation content from different levels, making the overall translation ecological environment balanced. There are also parts in this paper that need improvement. For instance, this paper lacks quantitative investigation and research when listing examples of movie subtitle translation. In the future, this method can also be applied to more translation fields, such as books and speeches, rather than being limited to the translation of film subtitles. Three-dimensional transformation translation method can enrich translation theory and practice, provide valuable reference for translators and help them make adaptive choices in the translation ecological environment. Moreover, the rational application of this method can promote cultural exchanges among countries and make global culture more prosperous.

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