

Research on Subtitling Publicity Film: A Case Study of Beautiful Jingzhou, Lovingly Pathetic

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Abstract:

With the booming development of China's "going global" strategy, subtitle translation has also become the focus of translation industry in recent years. However, mistranslations emerge in large numbers endlessly, which cannot promote cross-cultural communication, but will lead to the wrong information of Chinese culture. From the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, the paper takes the subtitle translation of the city publicity film "Beautiful Jingzhou, Lovingly Pathetic" as the object of study. With the help of Professor Zhang Delu's theory of multimodal discourse analysis, we will analyze the subtitle translation through four dimensions of culture, context, content and expression. In conclusion, the application of multimodal discourse analysis theory in subtitle translation can provide a new and better way for future research on Chinese subtitle translation.

Keywords:

Subtitle Translation, Publicity Films, Multimodel Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

With the enhancement of China's comprehensive strength, people start to pay more attention to their personal spiritual level. In addition to introducing excellent foreign cultural works, Chinese scholars need to promote cultural communication and tell Chinese stories well. Cultural external translation has become a hot spot of concern from all walks of life. There are various forms for culture going out, and the common one is the translation of ancient books and film and television works. Compared with the former one, film and television works are characterized by short time-consuming, easy communication and easy to understand. Therefore, as one kind of communication media, film and television works, are an important step for culture to go out, especially the release of documentaries and publicity films about China's national conditions and excellent culture. The present research attempts to study the case of Beautiful Jingzhou, Lovingly Pathetic under the theoretical framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis which is proposed by Professor Zhang Delu. The study is conducted from four levels, namely the cultural level, contextual level,

content level and expression level, to analyze how the subtitle translation in this publicity coordinates with other modes. Furthermore, it discusses the influences and functions on the subtitle translation exerted by various modalities.

2. Literature

Many scholars conduct a multi-modal analysis of subtitle translation from different theoretical perspectives. For example, Taylor [19] uses the multimodal transcription theory to explore how oral discourse interacts with other symbolic resources of constructing meaning through the form of subtitles. Lv Jian and Wu Wenzhi [17] studies the subtitling translation of “The Flowers of War” from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis through cultural level, context level, content level, expression level. And it is found that the subtitle translator combined the film language with images, sounds and other symbols, which better conveyed the humanity care upheld by the film to the target audience. Balirano [1] integrates multi-modal analysis methods and corpus methods to conduct a multi-modal study on the humorous discourse in the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* and its Italian dubbing version. The multimodal framework constructed in this study provides referable operational guidelines for translators to translate audiovisual humorous discourse. Some foreign scholars, Hurtado and Gallego [12] for example, use corpus analysis to explore the translator's strategy of converting auditory information into translated words under the influence of images. This research can help to solve the problem that deaf people can not effectively obtain auditory information in the translation audience, and its interdisciplinary research methods are also worth learning for reference.

To systematically analyze the current situation of subtitle translation research from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, the author input “multimodal discourse perspective”, “subtitle translation” on CNKI website to have a theme retrieval, and 126 related literature are founded, including 13 about documentary translation. For example, Huang Huihui and Du Jing [11] publishes the paper—Documentary substituting strategies from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis: A case study of Outstanding Henan. Huang thinks that subtitle translation is different from the general translation. Translators engaged in subtitle translation must consider the film picture, sound, characters and expression to achieve the most accurate translation. In addition to the limitation of time, space, subtitle translation should be as short as possible, appropriate, conform to the content of the picture. As for some subtitles can not be fully expressed or translated by inadequate expression, the compensating effect can be achieved by the picture. Chen Yang [2] in his Master Practical Report studies subtitle translation of “Micro-Record of New Lanzhou” from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis. In his paper, the methods of the subtitle translation of the documentary are mainly analyzed and summarized: supplementary translation, provincial translation and Italian translation, which solves the translation difficulties of cultural load words, local characteristic vocabulary, Chinese four characters and no main sentences caused by cultural differences, language differences and domain transformation in the translation process. Taking the COVID-19 thematic documentary as the research corpus, Gong Mengru [7] adopts a research method combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, identifies conceptual metaphors in subtitles through MIP, quantifies subtitling text using NVivo 12 Plus, and analyzes metaphorical translation in combination with specific translation examples. Other papers are mostly related to movies at home and abroad. While

inputting “multi-modal”, “publicity video translation”, only get 14 papers. Those mainly involve three aspects, respectively, for the local city, the national image, and the publicity of folk culture. For example, Fu Liting [5] took “Four Seasons of China — Awakening of Insects” as an example to analyze the publicity documentary subtitle translation. In Liang Huan’s study of the publicity translation strategy on folk culture under multimodal theory, she proposes that translator are supposed to translate reasonably according to the domestic and foreign culture and language differences. In the process of multimodal integration, integration of the original text and the translation integration are required. [16] It can be seen that at present, domestic scholars focus more on the subtitle translation of movies and TV dramas, while ignoring the publicity of urban publicity videos and other fields of content.

Regarding the related research on subtitle translation, western scholars’ research on film and television translation can be traced back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. Traduction et Cinéma in the journal *Le linguiste/Detaalkundige* published in 1956 and *Cinéma et traduction*, a special edition of the magazine *Babel* published in 1960, can be said to be the earliest theoretical studies of film and television translation in Europe. Istvan Fodor is a landmark figure in the field of dubbing and dubbing, and his research is the foundation of translation theory research. In his English book *Film Dubbing: Phonetic, Semiotic, Esthetic and Psychological Aspects* published in 1976, he systematically studied the dubbing and dubbing of film and television works for the first time from the perspectives of linguistics, semiotics, psychology, and aesthetics. In his article “Les sous—titres ..unmal nécessaire”, Marleau summarizes and classifies the problems existing in film and television translation from the perspectives of technology, psychology, linguistics and artistic aesthetics. In 1982, Titford first proposed the concept of “constrained translation” in *Subtitling Constrained Translation*. Titford thinks that the main problems translators facing is derived essentially from the constraints imposed on the translator by the medium itself (1982: 113)

Compared with Western countries, domestic theoretical research on film and television translation started later than the practice of film and television translation, and no systematic theory has emerged so far. Compared with the mainstream fields of academia such as literary translation, the number of papers and monographs related to film and television translation are very few. There are some renowned scholars in film and television subtitle translation, such as Qian Shaochang, Ma Zhengqi, Zhang Chunbai, Li Yunxing, etc. Professor Qian Shaochang once pointed out: “The number of receptors(audiences) of translated productions far exceeds the number of receptors(readers) of translated literary works, but on the contrary, the translation circle attaches much less importance to film and television translation than literary translation.” The study of Chinese and foreign translation scholars is mainly engaged in the following aspects: subtitle translation study related to multimedia translation, subtitle translation strategy, the quality of subtitle translation and subtitle translation standardization. In “Comparison of the Development and Current Situation of Chinese and Western Film and Television Translation Theory”, Kangle summarized the dilemma of Chinese film subtitle translation as follows: i. The academic circle does not pay enough attention to film and television translation; ii. There is a lack of systematic theory; iii. Film and television subtitles involve the processing of extra-textual factors; iv. It is difficult for researchers to obtain first-hand convincing research materials; v. There is a lack of professional subtitle translation talents. [13]

3. Theoretical Framework

One of the earliest researchers in multimodal discourse analysis is R Barthes. In his paper *Rhetoric of the Image* published in 1977, he explored the interaction between images and language in the sense of expression. Science tell us that the life body gradually obtains five different sensory channels, including visual channels, auditory channel, tactile channel, olfactory channel and gustatory channel. Biologists believe that the acquisition of the above five sensory channels leads to the following five communicative modes: visual modality, auditory modality, tactile modality, olfactory modality and gustatory modality. Among the above modalities, the most closely related to discourse analysis are the visual and auditory modes. Although the multimodal discourse analysis also absorbs media, object and interpretation from the semiotics theory of Pierce and others, its main theoretical basis is the systematic functional linguistics founded by Halliday [8,9,10]. Since the mid-1990s, systematic functional language scholars have shifted the research focus of symbolic language society on the basis of his functional linguistics to image (Kress & van Leeuwen; O'Toole), sound (van Leeuwen) and action (Martinec). Among them, the most prominent and representative is the grammatical framework of analyzing visual images constructed by Chris and Kress & van Leeuwen, which thus provides a theoretical basis and analysis method for multimodal discourse analysis. Kress & Van Leeuwen points out that multimodal theory refers to all the channels and media involved in the communication process, in addition to the basic language symbols exposed to in life, but also includes color, images, music, color saturation and other resource symbols system. [14] Li Zhanzi points out that the multimodal utterance is a composite text with images, charts, etc., in addition to the text, or any more symbolic code to realize the meaning. Zhang Delu [21] constructed a theoretical framework for the multimodal discourse analysis, and thus created a comprehensive framework for multimodal discourse analysis composed of five systems and their secondary categories. The above five levels are cultural level, context level, meaning level, form level and media level respectively. [21]

In the past, the research on the subtitle translation of the film and TV series has focused on the study of a single language symbol and subtitle text. However, the films and TV work are dynamic texts composed of multiple symbol resources. The language conversion of the subtitles alone cannot comprehensively and accurately interpret the cultural connotation and social significance expressed in the film and TV series. Multimodal discourse analysis emerging in the 1990s is an independent frontier academic research field produced on the basis of systematic functional linguistics. This theory mainly studies how multiple symbolic resources cooperate in the same discourse to construct meaning and communicate. Therefore, multimodal discourse analysis provides a whole new perspective to the study of subtitle translation. [23]

Under the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis, put forward by professor Zhang, the paper makes a study on *Beautiful Jingzhou, Lovingly Pathetic* from culture, context, content, expression of four levels, analyzes that how the subtitle translation combined with other modes, and jointly build the overall meaning, expressing the culture and significance of a city.

4. Case Study

4.1. *An overview of the film's subtitling*

Before we discuss the subtitle translation of city publicity videos, we should first know the definition of subtitle translation. Henrik Gottlieb [6] defines subtitle translation as “the rendering in a different language of verbal messages in filmic media, in the shape of one or more lines of written text, presented on the screen in synch with the original verbal message.” There are interlingual subtitling, intralingual subtitling, bilingual subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, surtitling and audio description. However, with the rapid development of this field, some activities fade out of the study scope, such as surtitling and audio description. Most of the current studies in this field focus on interlingual subtitling and voice-over, which are often combined together in studying documentaries and publicity films.

As an important medium for cross-regional, cross-cultural communication, cross-language publicity and promotion, city publicity film is not only an important business card to show the city's own advantages, but also an effective means to attract potential passengers and stimulate economic growth, including the highest reputation and the most beautiful image of a city. In view of refining the unique humanity and accurately expressing the differentiated positioning of the city, the study of subtitle translation is of great value. [22] As a historical and cultural city, Jingzhou integrates ancient culture and modern civilization together. The publicity film of “Beautiful Jingzhou, Lovingly Pathetic” is eight and a half minutes long. It is well-made and full of content. Bilingual subtitles have certain research value for the external translation of Jingchu culture. The publicity video traces the history, development and achievements of Jingzhou culture, and plays an important role in improving the city's status, building a cultural brand, casting the city spirit, and showing the colorful and vibrant Jingzhou culture to the world. At the same time, the style of Jingzhou and the lingering charm of Chu state is delivered by the publicity.

4.2. Analysis of the film's subtitling at four levels

4.2.1. The cultural level

The cultural dimension is the key dimension to making multimodal possible. The tradition, the form and the technology of communication are all determined by this level. [21] The publicity, as a form of cultural exchange, its subtitle translation is an important way to understand the cultural connotation. Therefore, the subtitle translation need to combine context and scene, express accurate and appropriate cultural connotation as far as possible to help foreign friends better understand the Chinese excellent traditional culture. For example:

Example 1

Source text: 落日清江里，荆歌艳楚腰。

Target text: As the poem described: the glistening river reflects the shadow of the sunset; the slender and graceful lady is singing a melodious folk song.

First of all, the poem in example 1 comes from the Lotus Picking Song, written by Liu Fangping of the Tang Dynasty. “Lotus Collection” is the old title of Yuefu poetry, also known as “Lotus Woman”, “Lotus Woman by the Lake”, etc., is one of the seven songs of “Jiangnan Lane”, which describes the life of lotus women in the south of the Yangtze River. The term “Songs of Jing” refers to folk ballads from Chu period. And “Chu waist” is recorded in the “Yan Zi Spring and Autumn Outward Parts” that “The King Ling of Chu prefers waist women, and many people starve to death in this period”. It shows that in order to please the king, the people of Chu were moderate in

eating and even died of this. Here the “Chu waist” refers to the slender body of beautiful lotus women. So the translator must know about cultural background of this poem, and be careful to convey the connotation. The whole scene is very imposing and beautiful. So the image mode and the sound mode are combined together, creating a classical scene, which promotes the translator to transfer the poetic scene by appropriate expression.

From the perspective of poetry translation appreciation, the syllables of this translated text is too much, namely 15 and 17, respectively, and there is no complete rhyme. And this poem is a five-character poem, so the syllables should be controlled in 12-14 syllables to meet a neat match. “As the poem described” is added by the translator, bridging the verse. Therefore, the translation of this poem does not need to be too long. Some images can be omitted, because there are matching pictures to help the audience to understand the meaning of the poem. So I translate this sentence as “The sunset is reflected in the clear river; the slim woman is singing a folk song over.”

4.2.2. The content level

The content level includes the discourse meaning level and the formal level (Zhang Delu, 2009). Discourse meaning refers to the conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning and strategic meaning to be conveyed in language expression. The formal level can be displayed together through language, visual and auditory modes. In general films, subtitles include narration and dialogue. The subtitles in the promotional film are basically the narrator's narration, and the dialogue accounts for a small proportion. Therefore, this may require translators to pay more attention to the accuracy of subtitle expression when translating, and their position may need to reduce some subjectivity, and try to use objective and formal words for translation.

Example 2

Source text: 不鸣则已，一鸣惊人的楚庄王；治楚三年而国霸的孙叔敖；镇守荆州，彪炳三国的关羽；有明第一相张居正。

Target text: King Zhuang of Chu State, who became a powerful chief, was a blockbuster. Sun Shuao developed Chu State into a hegemon after three years governance. Guan Yu, the representative of the Three Kingdoms, garrisoned in Jingzhou. Zhang Juzheng was a renowned cabinet minister of Ming Dynasty.

In terms of meaning, the translation in example 2 basically conveys the meaning of the original text. Due to the restriction of time and space, translators should choose appropriate methods to simplify the word on the premise of not losing the essential meaning. The audience can understand the communicative significance of the discourse through the voice and dialogue in the film and television works. On the formal level, the discourse mode of film and television works is mainly reflected in the auditory mode structure, including speech and sound, but there are also visual modes such as images. King Zhuang of Chu State amazed the world with a single brilliant feat. Sun Shuao was appointed as a prime minister of Chu and assisted King Zhuang of Chu. Guan Yu followed Liu Bei, and then defended Jingzhou. Zhang Juzheng was a famous prime minister in Ming dynasty. But foreign audience are unfamiliar with them. When introducing these historical figures, the picture will cut to the dynasties, backgrounds, or places of residence related to the figures, so as to give foreign audience a space for understanding Chinese historical people. In this way, the combination of the picture and the subtitles gives the audience a good cognitive

experience. In the auditory mode, the music of the whole scene is constantly high, showing the glorious achievements of the four leading figures. With the form of pictures and sound, it is vivid and eye-catching.

4.2.3. The contextual level

In a specific context, communication is restricted by contextual factors, including contextual factors determined by the scope of discourse, tone of discourse, and discourse mode. Subtitles of promotional films are to convey information, and the carrier of information is subtitles, and subtitles are subject to context, so the translation of subtitles should take contextual factors into account. To a certain extent, subtitle translation may also play a role in linking the previous and the next, and strive to make the text smooth. For example:

Example 3

Source text: 山随平野尽，江入大荒。荆州依山傍水，得江独厚。长江抱城而过，长湖拱城而卧。

Target text: The mountains vanish with the fields and the rivers run towards the ocean. Yantze River, as Jingzhou's favorable natural condition, encircles and passes through the city. Changhu Lake Crouches by the city.

Usually, translators see the sentence in example 3 and translate it literally. In order to do a good job in subtitle translation, we need to combine the context. In addition to paying attention to the text, we also need to pay attention to the content of the picture, voice, intonation, etc., all the forms that may express the real content. However, from the first half of the sentence "The mountains follow the plains", the picture cuts to the Yangtze River, and because the previous poem has been translated, the sentence that "Jingzhou is blessed by the mountains and rivers (荆州依山傍水)" was omitted and only used "Yantze River, as Jingzhou's favorable natural condition" to connect with the context. What's more, the situational context lets the translator pay more attention to the meaning reception for the audience of target language and the appropriate usage of domestication, and it also provides a good perspective for translation researchers to study the methods and techniques of subtitle translation.

4.2.4. The expression level

The expression level including language media level and non-verbal media level [21]. At the level of language media, the main forms of meaning transmission are sound symbols and written symbols. The non-verbal media level includes the communicator's body and non-verbal means (mainly tools and environments). For example:

Example 4

Source text: 荆州，这座国家历史文化名城，中国优秀旅游城市，国家园林城市，江汉平原现代化中心城市，长江中游重要中心城市...

Target text: Jingzhou, the National Historic Cultural City, National Excellent Tourism City, National Garden City, Modernized Central City on Jiangnan Plain, Important City on the Middle Reaches of Yangtze River...

In this part of the promotional film in example 4, the decibels was deliberately increased. With imposing music, it sets off a strong sense of picture, making the audience can't help but feel proud of Jingzhou's achievements. At the same time, the

Chinese subtitle front here is specially enlarged to emphasize the development momentum and achievements of Jingzhou and achieve the expression at the language media level. On the level of context, the subtitle translation takes the three modalities into consideration, which yields a better translation quality.

4.3. Discussion and Implications

The study has found that the subtitles of the promotional film have the following three characteristics: 1. Keeping the subtitle and the picture consistent with each other; 2. The register changes frequently; 3. The subtitle expression is limited by the time and space.

But there are the following common problems at the same time:

There is no parallelism between English and Chinese subtitles, and large sections of English are put together in a confused form. There are often only English subtitles without corresponding Chinese subtitles; or vice versa, which is very unfriendly to both Chinese and English viewers.

The above examples prove that there are sufficient effective instances to demonstrate the feasibility of the application of multimodal discourse analysis on publicity subtitle translation. The publicity film makes full use of various modes, such as text, visual and auditory symbols, to show the audience a vivid image---a comprehensive and three-dimensional Jingzhou. Firstly, it's crucial to pay attention to the culture transmission and intercultural communication in translating subtitles. The cultural differences between the TL and SL countries should be taken into consideration. Therefore, when translating culture-loaded words, it is need other modalities to complement defective meaning, such as relevant images. Secondly, in terms of contextual level, fully considering the context and plot content, as well as the scene context constructed by the current picture and sound, the subtitle translation skills such as modification, deletion and free translation are adopted. Thirdly, subtitled text interacts with the visual mode and the auditory mode together, playing a role in the generation of meaning. In the film discourse, the formal level is mainly manifested oral discourse, background music and other sound effects of auditory modality, as well as the pictures and subtitles of visual modality. The complementarity and reinforcement between the different symbol systems makes the film more appreciative. Fourthly, in expression level, it is necessary to focus on media level and non-verbal media level through a strong sense of picture and sound to achieve the best effect.

5. Conclusions

This paper uses the theory of multimodal discourse analysis to discuss the subtitle translation of the publicity video “Beautiful Jingzhou, Lovingly Pathetic” from the cultural level, contextual level, content level and expression level respectively. The analysis found that, as a discourse that integrates multiple modalities, each modal interacts and complements each other. It is not just a simple list and superposition, nor is it dominated by a single modal. The publicity video is able to successfully reach the equivalence between domestic audiences with foreign audiences across cultural differences, and translation plays an important role. The promotional video uses light, scene and composition to enhance the picture texture, select appropriate background music to enhance the emotional resonance with the audience, reasonably retain the

simultaneous sound, increase authenticity and scene sense and match appropriate narration to comply with pictures. Therefore, in the rapidly developing information age and multimedia age, we can spread Chinese culture well by making and translating promotional videos based on a multimodal perspective. The results of this study indicate that more researches and studies can be conducted in this field.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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