

## A Study on Subtitle Translation of *Chinese Doctors* from the Perspective of Three Dimensional Transformation in Eco-translatology

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### Abstract

Since the emergence of translation is accompanied by the development of language, the history of translation is virtually as long as that of language. Movies and television, however, have only been around for a hundred years, and the history of subtitle translation is relatively shorter. But in recent years, with the comprehensive national power is increasingly strengthened, China has witnessed a rapid economic development and begun to pay high attention to the healthy development of the film and television. In addition, China has introduced a series of policies and regulations to encourage and support the film and television industry. At the same time, with its own efforts, the film and television industry is gradually developing towards the direction of scalable and collective development, and has begun to move towards the international stage. This paper will take *Chinese Doctors* as the main research object, analyze it from the perspective of three-dimensional transformation in eco-translatology, and discuss the translation strategies and methods in subtitle translation, aiming to help foreign scholars understand Chinese film and television works and to promote China's language and culture to the world. Hoping this paper will be helpful to the following subtitle translation researches.

### Keywords

Eco-tralatology; Three-dimensional Transformation; Subtitle translation; Domesticating Translation; Foreignizing Translation.

### 1. Introduction

In this Chapter, it includes two parts. One is the introduction of *Chinese Doctors*, and the other is the definition of the perspective of three dimensional transformation in eco-translatology.

#### 1.1. The Introduction of *Chinese Doctors*

This film is based on a real event in the fight against COVID-19 in 2020. The story happened in a small hospital which called Jinyintan Hospital in Wuhan Province. On the eve of the Spring Festival in 2020, it was supposed to be a day of family union. But with the outbreak and spread of the virus, more and more patients began to flood into this hospital. Due to the increasing number of patients, which far exceeded the capacity of the hospital, the problems, such as the shortage of medical protective materials, medical equipment and medical staff, were becoming more and more serious. The Jinyintan Hospital, a specialized infectious disease hospital, took up its responsibility, made people's life as a priority of priorities, and accepted all patients without any hesitation. At the same time, medical teams around the country had also rushed to the front line of Wuhan to save the lives of their compatriots regardless of their own safety. These medical teams worked together with Jinyintan Hospital to fight against the virus. Finally,

with the efforts of all people, the pandemic was effectively contained, all patients recovered and left the mobile cabin hospital, Wuhan ended the lockdown and its people began to live a normal life.

In this desperate contest with the pandemic, China fought with great spirit of putting people's lives first, nationwide unity, sacrifice, respect of science, and a sense of mission for humanity.

## **1.2. The Definition of the Perspective of Three-dimensional Transformation in Eco-translatology**

Ecological translatology theory is proposed by Chinese scholar-- Professor Hu Gengshen. He was first come up with this theory in his book "*An Approach to Translation as Adaptation and Selection*". Ecological translatology is based on Darwin's Adaptation and Selection theory and it pays more attention to the whole environment of translation. Professor Hu Gengshen put forward this theory in 2001 and later it was applied to translation. He said, "ecological translatology started in 2001 and fully developed in 2009<sup>[1]</sup>. In this theory, he made a definition of ecological translatology. Ecological translatology is a translator's adaptation and selection during the process of translating in the ecological environment, or an ecological approach to translation studies. It focuses on explaining the translation process from the perspective of ecological environment, presenting the relationship between translator and ecological environment, that is, the wholeness of ecological translation, and it pays attention to the translators' living conditions and the development of translators' ability<sup>[2]</sup>. That is to say, if a translator wants to translate well, he or she must adapt to the ecological environment and then choose the most appropriate translation. In conclusion, since the development of ecological translatology has become more and more popular in the field of translation and it was proposed by Chinese scholar, the discussion of its application is beneficial for Chinese translation theory goes out.

About three-dimensional transformation, it includes linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. The linguistic dimension is mainly the translation of language structure and it pays high attention to the words and phrases of the target text. The cultural dimension attaches importance to cultural information and connotation of target text, such as custom, habit, religion and so on. And the communicative dimension emphasizes the deep meaning of source text and pays high attention to communicative effect of target text.

## **2. The Introduction of Subtitle Translation**

In this chapter, the definition of subtitle translation will be introduced firstly. The paper will introduce the different classifications of the subtitle translation, and five characters of subtitle translation will be presented in the third part.

### **2.1. Definition of Subtitle Translation**

Today, subtitle and dubbing are two mainstreams of film and television translation, and more and more people tend to watch films with subtitles. But what is the definition of subtitle? Subtitle refers to the display of non-image content such as dialogues and monologues in television, films and stage works in the form of words, and also refers to the post-possessing words of film and television works. The subtitle aims to help audiences understand the content of film and content. Captions, such as film title, cast list, lyrics, dialogues, introduction of characters, place names and years, are all called subtitle. Likewise, the subtitle translation refers to a translation of the source text of films into another language, and usually the translation is on the line below the original.

## 2.2. Classification of Subtitle Translation

According to different classification standards, subtitle translation can be divided into different classes. Here are only four classification standards in the book of *A practical guide to English-Chinese audiovisual translation*[3].

First, from the perspective of language, it can be divided into intralingual subtitles, interlingual subtitles and bilingual subtitles. And as far as intralingual subtitles are concerned, it can be divided further into SDH (subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing), language learning subtitles, Karaoke subtitles, intralingual dialect subtitles, public notice subtitles in film and television works and so on.

Second, from the perspective of production time of film and television, it can be divided into pre-prepared subtitles and live or real-time subtitles.

Third, from the perspective of technical indicator, it can be divided into open subtitles and closed subtitles. Open subtitles cannot be removed or closed because it is made in advance and when people see the film or television, the subtitles have already set on the screen, while the closed subtitles can be selected by audiences, and they can choose whether to display subtitles on the screen or not according to their own need.

Fourth, from the perspective of subtitle projection modes, it can be divided into mechanical and thermal subtitling, laser subtitling and electronic subtitling. And in our modern society, the main modes of subtitle projection are laser subtitling and electronic subtitling.

About the film of *Chinese Doctors*, its subtitles can be regarded as bilingual subtitles, intralingual dialect subtitles, pre-prepared subtitles, laser subtitling and electronic subtitling.

## 2.3. Characters of Subtitle Translation

Mr. Qian Shaochang wrote in his paper, "Film and television language not only contains the elements of general literary language, but also has its own unique characters, such as instantaneousness, listening, comprehensiveness, popularity and no note." [4]

Instantaneousness requires that the translation of subtitles should be concise and clear, so as to help audiences understand the content of the film or television at a glance. Unlike other literary works, subtitles of film and television cannot be read repeatedly, and they may only appear once in the film or television. Therefore, to get a good subtitle translation, translators should take instantaneousness into consideration.

Listening refers to that in most film and television works, audiences pay more attention to listening to the sounds in the film or television, while they pay more attention to looking the images and plots in the film or television. Since the profound traditional culture of the Chinese nation has a long history, it has many Chinese characters with the same pronunciation and various heteronyms. Therefore, translators must consider in this regard when they translate subtitles of film and television works, otherwise, it is easy to cause cultural conflicts and worsen the understanding of audiences on content of the film or television.

Comprehensiveness refers to that the subtitle translation should be consistent with the dialogues, monologues, images, sounds and gestures of actors or actress. All of these require translators consider a comprehensive environment of the film or the television.

Publicity refers to that the subtitle translation should be concise and easy-to-understand. Whether it is a film or a TV play, as a mass media, its language must meet the level of public appreciation. Therefore, translators should take the public educated level into consideration, using some easy-to-understand words or phrases instead of difficult ones.

No note refers to that the subtitle translation cannot add any annotation after some special or professional words. Unlike the literary works, translators can add some annotations to help his target readers understand his translation of literary works. The subtitle translation usually should be concise, and there is no space to add any annotation. If translators add annotations

to subtitle translation, it will influence the viewing experience of audiences, because audiences cannot not read all lines at a glance. Thus, subtitle translation cannot add any annotation, and translators must remember in this regard.

### 3. The Application of Three-dimensional Transformation in Subtitle Translation of *Chinese Doctors*

In this chapter, the definition of three-dimensional transformation will be summarized. And then the analysis of subtitle translation in the film will be introduced respectively from linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. In addition, the methods of domesticating translation and foreignizing translation which used in the subtitle translation will be analyzed.

#### 3.1. The Three-dimensional Transformation in Eco-translatology

From the perspective of translation as Adaptation and Selection, translation is regarded as the translator's adaptation and selection to the eco-environment. Therefore, eco-translatology believes that the perspective of translation as Adaptation and Selection can be summarized as the "Three-dimensional Transformation", including linguistic dimension, cultural dimension and communicative dimension. Linguistic dimension requires translators to adapt the linguistic environment between source text and target text. Cultural dimension requires translators to consider the cultural environment between source text and target text. As for communicative dimension, translators need to realize the communicative purpose between source text and target text.

#### 3.2. The Analysis of Subtitle Translation of *Chinese Doctors* from Linguistic Dimension

Example 1

Source Text: 麻烦给个好评!  
má fán gěi gè hǎo píng

Target Text: Please leave me a good rating!

In this sentence, the word “好评” was translated into “a good rating” in the film. In general, “好评” can be translated into “praise; positive comment; good review” and so on, but the translator chose to translate it into “a good rating”. Obviously, the translator took the linguistic dimension into consideration. In the Oxford Dictionary, “rating” refers to a rating of something is a score or measurement of how good or popular it is. Since this sentence was said by a delivery man, “a good rating” can better express the feelings of the speaker. In addition, the word “给” was translated into “leave” instead of “give”. In our modern society, “a good rating” to a delivery man are often written in words on some delivery apps, rather than verbal praise. Therefore, the translator seized on this linguistic feature and used foreignizing translation to translate “给” into “leave”, which made the whole linguistic environment become vivid and aroused target readers' imagination.

Example 2

Source Text: 有些患者的神志仍然是清楚的。  
yǒu xiē huàn zhě de shén zhì réng rán shì qīng chǔ de

Target Text: Some of the patients are conscious and responsive.

In this example, in order to facilitate the understanding of target readers, the translator chose the translation methods of omission and addition from the perspective of linguistic dimension. The translator did not translate “神志”, and replaced it with “conscious” that included the meaning of “神志” in it. In addition, the translator added an adjective--responsive-- to further describe the patients' conditions. All of these are in line with the form of linguistic expression.

## Example 3

Source Text: duì yú zhōngguó zhēnduì zhèzhǒng xīnxìngguān zhuàngbìng dú de diào chá  
 hé zài wǔhàn shí shī de yìng duì cuò shī  
 对于中国针对这种新型冠状病毒的调查  
 和在武汉实施的应对措施  
 qí zhì liàng shì néngguò bǎo zhèng de 。  
 其质量是能过保证的。

Target Text: Regarding the Chinese investigation into the Novel Coronavirus  
 And virus prevention work in Wuhan  
 That the quality is exceptional

Verbs are used more frequently in Chinese, while nouns are used more in English. In this translation, the translator considered in this regard, and translated “实施的应对措施” into a noun phrase, that was, “virus prevention work”. In general, “应对措施” tends to be translated into “solution”, but the translator translated it into “prevention work”, which was more formal, aiming to emphasize China’s efforts in the prevention and control of novel coronavirus. At the same time, the translator translated “保证的” into “exceptional” instead of “guaranteed”. In the Oxford dictionary, “exceptional” means outstanding. Therefore, it can be seen that the translator experienced the deep meaning of the original, and conveyed the original text’s recognition and praise of China’s response and efforts to novel coronavirus.

### 3.3. The Analysis of Subtitle Translation of Chinese Doctors from Cultural Dimension

## Example 1

Source Text: xué diǎn hǎo  
 学点好

Target Text: Stop messing around

This sentence was said by a senior woman doctor. At that time, a younger doctor was naughty, and imitated the dean’s lame walk, so she educated the younger doctor and said, “学点好”( Stop messing around). The translator did not translated “学点好” into “learn something good”, which demonstrated that the translator considered the cultural dimension of the specific context in the film. “mess around” means someone is behaving in a joking or silly way. In addition, “mess around” vividly describes the naughty character of this younger doctor. But through the tests of the pandemic, this younger doctor became a mature and stable doctor. Thus, “mess around” can also pave a way for the next several plots. The translator used domesticating translation to facilitate the understanding of foreigners.

## Example 2

Source Text: zhōu yǒng de mā hé 9 chuáng de bìng rén  
 zuó tiān wǎn shàng gāng zǒu  
 周勇的妈和9床的病人  
 昨天晚上刚走

Target Text : Zhou Yong’s mom and bed 9’s patient  
 Passed away last night

In China, “death” is regraded as a taboo. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have used different words to replace the word “death”. For example, in ancient China, there were specific words to describe the death of emperors, ministers or civilians, which avoided the use of the Chinese character “死”. Although in the West, Westerners do not deliberately avoid talking about death, they usually use euphemisms to talk about this subject, such as “pass away, fall asleep, pass out” and so on. In this sentence, the translator took the cultural environment between China and the West into consideration, and translated the “刚走” in the original into “pass away”. If the translator did the translation work directly without watching this film, he may

translate "刚走" into "walk away", mistakenly thinking that the patient had been discharged from the hospital. Since the translator watched this film and understood this plot, he translated it into "pass away", rather than "walk away" or "dead". Obviously, this translation method is domesticating translation, which is in line with the euphemistic expression of the Chinese people and the Westerners.

#### Example 3

Source Text: 士

不可以不弘毅

任重而道远

为国为民

是为大孝

Target Text: An educated man

Cannot be but resolute and broad-minded

For he has a huge responsibility

For country for people

Is for filial piety

“士不可以不弘毅，任重而道远” in the source text is from the Analects of Confucius, and the whole sentence is “士不可以不弘毅，任重而道远，仁以为己任，不亦重乎，死而后已，不亦远乎？” which means an educated gentlemen may not be without strength and resoluteness of character. His responsibility in life is a heavy one, and the way is long. He is responsible to himself for living a moral life; is that not a heavy responsibility? He must continue in it until he dies; is the way then not a long one?<sup>[5]</sup> Due to the film translation should consider space and time limitation, the translator used the reductive form of translation. Although the translator compressed the translation, he still retained the connotation of the source text, which was a manifestation of foreignizing translation. The translation depicts the heavy responsibility on medical staff, and demonstrates that the pandemic prevention and control is a protracted battle that requires all people to work together and help each other. In addition, the translator translated “大孝” in the original into “filial piety”, which conveys the meaning of the source text well.

### 3.4. The Analysis of Subtitle Translation of *Chinese Doctors* from Communicative Dimension

#### Example 1

Source Text: 新冠病毒就像疯子一样

拿着枪在病人身上

东一枪西一枪地乱开

Target Text: But this virus is like a lunatic

Holding a gun to our patients

And firing uncontrollably

In the source text, it used a figure of speech of simile, while the translation also used this figure of speech. The translator used foreignizing translation to retain the connotation of the original text, and the one-to-one correspondence between the translation and the original text not only retains the connotation of the original text, but also makes the whole image become vivid, which can facilitate target reader's deep understanding of the devastation of novel coronavirus and achieve the communicative purpose.

#### Example 2

Source Text: 雪中送炭

Target Text: Receiving charcoal for warmth during winter

From the translation of “炭”, it can be seen that the translator used the foreignizing translation and literal translation, because the translator translated “炭” into “charcoal”, rather than “help” or “needs”. In the Chinese, “雪中送炭” is a phrase, and its profound meaning is to help people who are badly in need. The translator adopted literal translation and foreignizing translation to retain the cultural element of the Chinese and promote the spread of the Chinese culture. Although this translation may cause target readers fail to understand its profound meaning, it does not impact target reader's understanding on the emotion expressed in the film through the image and word-to-word translation. After all, in the severe winter days, charcoal can indeed bring warmth to people, both physically and psychological. Thus, the adaptation and choice of translators to communicative dimension can be demonstrated and the communicative purpose is still achieved.

Example 3

Source Text: 人命关天啊

Target Text: Lives are at stake

Example 4

Source Text: 重赏之下，必有勇夫

Target Text: When the price is right, someone is bound to help

From example 4 and example 5, it can be seen that the translator used the domesticating translation, which aims to help target reader's understanding of the context in the film and achieve the communicative purpose. The translator translated “人命关天” into “Lives are at stake”, rather than “human is most precious” or “human life is beyond value”. Obviously, the translation of the translator is more accordance with the source text. From the phrase of “at stake”, audiences can realize the urgency of the situation. In this plot, the jinyintan hospital was out of power. But at that time, medical staff were still operating on the patients. Power failure was rather dangerous at that moment, which was related to their life security. Therefore, the dean exclaimed to technician, “人命关天啊 (Lives are at stake)”. The translator considered the communicative dimension and conveyed the urgency of the situation. As for the example 5, this plot was about the shortage of oxygen tank in Jinyintan Hospital. The dean asked his staff to purchase more, but it was almost Chinese New Year, most manufacturers stop production. The dean immediately decided to add more money and contact other manufacturers right now, because he believed that when the price is right, someone is bound to help. The translation conforms to the context of the source text and accurately expresses its meaning.

#### 4. Conclusion

Film is a way of cultural communication, which involves rich cultural connotations. Therefore, subtitle translation is not only the translation of words, but also a cultural translation. Whether Chinese films go global or foreign films are introduced to China, it is a kind of integration of Chinese and Western cultures. In order to avoid such cultural integration becoming cultural conflict, the quality of subtitle translation should be increasingly improved. Eco-translatology can provide analysis and guidance for subtitle translation, while the translation methods of three-dimensional transformation, domesticating translation and foreignizing translation can improve the translator's translation for the subtitle translation. All of these will promote Chinese films to better enter the international stage and spread Chinese culture.

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