

# A Study on the Subtitle Translation of Dialect in the Film *Love Myth* from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

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## Abstract

As an important way to spread Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories abroad in the era of film and television, the importance of film is evident. In the process of spreading films abroad, subtitle translation plays an extremely important role. To a certain extent, the quality of translation directly determines whether the film can successfully reach overseas markets. From the perspective of eco-translatology, this paper takes the dialect subtitle translation of the film *Love Myth* as an example, analyzes the dialect subtitle translation of the film from the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions, and explains the advantages and disadvantages of the subtitle translation of the film, so as to find the most suitable subtitle translation strategy to promote Chinese films to the world.

## Keywords

Eco-translatology; Shanghai dialect; Subtitle translation; *Love Myth*.

## 1. Introduction

*Love Myth* is a romantic film directed by Shao Yihui, starring Xu Zheng, Ma Yili, Wu Yue, Ni Hongjie and Zhou Nomang, and was released in December 2021 in mainland China. It focuses on three women and two men who, in the modern city of Shanghai, use their wits and humor to make their way through the city's diverse lifestyles. In recent years, with the gradual advancement of globalization and the rapid development of the film and television industry, subtitle translation has begun to occupy an increasingly important position in the field of translation. In the movie *Love Myth*, the most impressive thing to the audience is the distinctive dialect dialogues of the characters in the movie, and the dialect-based subtitle translation also provides an effective research channel for translators.

## 2. Overview of Eco-translatology

The theory of Eco-translatology was proposed in 2001 by Professor Gengshen Hu of Tsinghua University, who borrowed the principle of biological evolution from biologist Darwin. It suggests that the process of translation is the same as the evolutionary process of organisms, and there is a process of "adaptive selection". Eco-translatology is not an independent discipline, but a cross-cutting theoretical study covering interdisciplinary nature. It is mainly composed of two parts, one is ecology and the other is translation science.

In recent years, the term "ecology" has been widely applied to various fields, mainly emphasizing the wholeness and harmony within each field, so as to present a natural and smooth state. The term "translation science" is a discipline that studies the law and art of translation, and is a kind of summary of the translation process and translation methods. Good translation cannot be achieved without the guidance of translation theory. Ecological translation science is based on the theoretical cornerstone of adaptation selection in biological evolution theory, supplemented by corresponding translation methods and principles. It

focuses on the overall harmonious symbiosis, so that it can make correct guidance for translation.

### 3. Overview of Subtitle Translation

Subtitle translation, as the name implies, is a process of translating the original movie subtitles into the target language. With the rapid development of film and television dramas, it has attracted most translators to focus their research on subtitle translation. However, so far, the definition of subtitle translation is still unclear. In general, subtitle translation consists of the following aspects: the object of translation is the language or text in a film or TV drama; the process of translation is to achieve the goal of translation between different languages. The process of translation is to realize the conversion between different languages; the purpose of translation is to help the audience understand the plot and content of the film.

Subtitle translation mainly has the characteristics of transience and comprehensiveness, transience is mainly manifested in the translation of subtitles is relatively simple and direct, because considering the audience's viewing experience, the language in the film is generally more concise, which requires the translation should also be simple and easy to understand. While This requires the translator to fully understand the meaning of the source language and make corresponding explanations, so as to help the audience better understand the meaning of the film. The role of subtitle translation is indispensable for a film to be understood and accepted by people from all regions and even all countries. The translation of subtitles in a film plays a crucial role in the process of foreign communication of film and television works, and the quality of translation will also directly affect the audience's understanding and acceptance of the film.

## 4. A Study of the Dialectal Subtitle Translation of Love Myth from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

### 4.1. Translation Transformation of Linguistic Dimensions in Dialect Subtitle Translation

Adaptive conversion of linguistic dimensions means that the translator has to consider different linguistic forms in the translation process and has to make adaptive conversions from different aspects and levels. English and Chinese are two very different languages. Therefore, in order to express Chinese in English, there must be a certain degree of conversion in the language presentation form. The translation of film subtitles should be based on the subtitles themselves, but also take into account the language comprehension needs of the target language audience. This requires the translator to fully understand the linguistic forms of both the source language and the target language in order to give an accurate and easily acceptable translation.

e.g. Original text: 钞票没赚多少，派头倒是蛮大。

Translation: You're way too charitable for someone who's not rich.

e.g. Original text: 钞票数目不大呀。

Translation: That's not much.

“钞票” literally means money. Shanghai dialect mostly uses the expression “钞票”. “派头” means imposing. The sentence “钞票没赚多少，派头倒是蛮大” means “You do not earn much money, but pretend to be rich”. Because of the limited number of words in the subtitles of the film, the translation should be as concise and clear as possible to achieve the correspondence in the language structure. Therefore, the translator directly translated the sentence as “You're way too charitable for someone who's not rich” and “That's not much”, which fully preserved the

original concise and easy-to-understand structural features of the sentence from the language dimension.

e.g. Original text: 哎哟，你嘴巴刁啊。

Translation: Wow, you can taste that?

This is what Mr. B said to Gloria when she tasted the dessert Mr. B served to the customer from the store, so he said she “嘴巴刁”, meaning that she had a delicate sense of taste.

e.g. Original text: 快点把房子的事弄清爽。

Translation: Just get the paperwork done for the house.

e.g. Original text: 你脑子不太清爽。

Translation: You're out of your mind.

The expression “清爽” are used twice in the film, but the meanings are not quite the same. In the first example, Mr. B's mother was worried that he might get married again, so she asked him to transfer his house to her grandson that he had with his ex-wife. The expression “清爽” here means that all the legal documents for the transfer of the property are signed and completed. However, in the second example, the expression “脑子不太清爽” refers to a person who is not clear-headed. In the process of translation, the translator noticed the difference in language ecology between Chinese and English, and made an adaptive shift, translating “清爽” in these two sentences as “get the paperwork done” and “be out of one's mind” respectively. The translation of these two sentences is in line with the understanding of the target language audience.

#### 4.2. Translation Transformation of Cultural Dimension in Dialect Subtitle Translation

Translation in the cultural dimension refers to the translator's focus on the transmission and expression of connotations between different cultures in the process of translation. Subtitling is transient and requires the translator to be as concise as possible in the translation process. Chinese culture has always been relatively obscure, especially when it comes to the expression of dialects, which requires the translator not only to focus on the subtitles themselves, but also to make selective expressions of the connotations that the subtitles are intended to express.

e.g. Original text: 嫁个外国瘪三。

Translation: Married that white trash.

Ms. Li is a single woman who has a daughter. Her mother complained all the time because she divorced and was left with a daughter from her early marriage to an irresponsible Englishman. She returned to Shanghai with her daughter and lived with her mother. Consequently, her mother was very unhappy with her life and often said nasty things to her. Here the “瘪三” refers to Ms. Li's ex-husband. “瘪三” usually refers to the city without a legitimate occupation and begging or stealing for a living hobo. “瘪三”, generally refers to the three defeats: no good living conditions, no livelihood occupation, no family business. In English, the expression “white trash” is used, meaning “an offensive term for white people who are impoverished”. Considering the differences in cultural background and thinking habits between Chinese and Western cultures, it is easy to be understood by translating it as “white trash”.

e.g. Original text: 我怎么生出你这样的讨债鬼?

Translation: What have I done to deserve a spoiled bastard like you?

In some places in China, young children who die are called “讨债鬼”, meaning that their parents owed a debt to someone else in a previous life, who was reincarnated there and died early as a means of collecting the debt. In daily life, it is used as a name for naughty children and is more

common in the dialect. This is also what Miss Li's mother said to her, meaning she was complaining about her daughter living with her. In China, this is a way for parents to complain about their children, but this is not the case abroad. So it requires the translator to restore the cultural connotation in the process of translation so that the audience can understand. Therefore, the subtitle uses the translation "a spoiled bastard", which well conveys the meaning of the film.

e.g. Original text: 钱花的像流水一样。

Translation: You're flushing my money down the toilet.

"花钱如流水" is from the Chinese folk saying "挣钱如捉鬼, 花钱如流水". It means that it is easy to spend money but hard to earn money. However, the English language does not compare the ease of spending money to flowing water, so here we should translate it into "You're flushing my money down the toilet" from the perspective of cultural dimension to be more convincing and better convey the meaning the film wants to express. It is more convincing and better conveys the meaning of the film.

### 4.3. Translation Transformation of Communicative Dimension in Dialect Subtitle Translation

Translation conversion of the communicative dimension refers to the adaptations made by the translator in the translation process according to the communicative intent between different languages. Since the purpose of subtitle translation is to help understand the movie plot, translators need to pay attention not only to the language and cultural dimension but also to the dimension of communicative dimension when translating. Love Myth is a domestic movie, and when promoting it to foreign countries, it should take into account the expression habits of foreign audiences, so as to conform to their communicative thinking as much as possible.

e.g. Original text: 烧出来色香味很嗲对吧。

Translation: So it comes out more fragrant.

e.g. Original text: 我说这么漂亮的女人, 漂亮、温柔、嗲。

Translation: I said you're a wonderful women. Pretty, gentle, and fascinating.

e.g. Original text: 这个女孩比洋洋好, 嗲。

Translation: This girl is better than Yangyang. She's dreamy.

Generally speaking, "嗲" describes the sound or gesture of pampering. However, in the Shanghai dialect, "嗲" has various meanings in different contexts. For example, to describe a dish as "色香味很嗲" means that it has good color and fragrance; to describe a woman as "嗲" means that she is charming and attractive. In the three examples above, the translator translated "嗲" as "fragrant, fascinating and dreamy". According to different contexts, the translator gave different translations, making an appropriate choice from the communicative dimension of Eco-translatology, in line with the audience's perception.

e.g. Original text: 今天灵啊。

Translation: You look gorgeous today.

e.g. Original text: 灵啊, 听得懂啊。

Translation: Wow, you understand that?

e.g. Original text: 灵啊, 灵啊。

Translation: What a .

e.g. Original text: 这个糖藕灵的啊。

Translation: These sweet lotus roots are amazing.

e.g. Original text: 好人啊，灵的。

Translation: She's a good one. A keeper.

e.g. Original text: 这个味道蛮灵的。

Translation: It actually smells good.

e.g. Original text: 我现在就是最好的状态，有钱有闲，老公失踪，不要太灵哦。

Translation: This is my time to shine. I'm rich and free, with my husband missing. You can't ask for a better life.

e.g. Original text: 灵啊，灵啊。

Translation: Looking good.

e.g. Original text: 灵得不得了。

Translation: Works like a charm.

In the lines of the film, the expression “灵” is used nine times. In general, “灵” refers to a positive, affirmative, appreciative meaning. According to the context, the translator translated these nine words, one as an exclamation which is wow; three as nouns, including knockout, keeper and charm; and five as adjectives, including gorgeous, amazing and good\*2, among which there is also a comparative -- better. Although they are the same expression, the translator's bilingual skills are greatly tested when translating them in different contexts. In addition, translators have to take into account the differences in communicative dimensions to avoid communicative barriers.

The transformation of the communicative dimension is reflected in the levels of communicative context and communicative style. The purpose of translators' adaptation is to make the target language audience have the same emotional experience as the source language audience.

## 5. Conclusion

To summarize, the theory of ecological translation plays a significant role in the subtitle translation of the film. In this paper, the author analyzed the dialect subtitle translation of the film *Love Myth* from three aspects of ecological translation theory: linguistic, cultural and communicative dimension. The translation of this film is successful on the whole, but there are some small flaws that still need to be improved. Through the analysis of this paper, the author hopes to provide reference for future film translations in order to produce the highest quality film translation and promote domestic films to go global more effectively.

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