

The translation of culture-loaded words in the subtitles of *Empresses in the Palace*: a Skopostheorie approach

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Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to explore the translation method of culture-loaded words in the subtitles of *Empresses in the Palace* from the perspective of Skopostheorie. In the translation of culture-loaded words in subtitles, the nature of the text should be taken into account first, and the characteristics and requirements of film and television subtitles should be satisfied. While translating, appropriate translation methods should be selected according to the translation purpose, such as transliteration, free translation, amplification and other translation methods.

Key words: Skopostheorie; subtitle translation; culture-loaded words; *Empresses in the Palace*

1 Introduction

Under the background of globalization, countries all over the world attach a great importance to translation to promote the worldwide dissemination of film and television works. The subtitle translation is a comprehensive text integrated by images, pictures, sounds, colors and other special symbols, which is restricted by space and time.

The costumes, makeup and props of the actors in the *Empresses in the Palace* are of high aesthetic and historical value, and the drama was finished in the professional spot of film and television, such as the Grand View Garden, which is a famous Chinese traditional architecture garden.

In terms of culture communication, the plots and screen pictures recreate the life environment of the Qing Dynasty. Therefore, it is a film and television work with great publicity value. Practically speaking, translators explore the subtitle translation of *Empresses in the Palace* based on various translation theories for achieving the purpose of cultural transmission.

2 A general introduction of Skopostheorie

The Skopostheorie has made a significant contribution to the development of translation since it was put forward in the 1970s [1].

2.1 About Skopostheorie

The main representatives of Skopostheorie are Katharina Reiss, Hans J. Vermeer, Justa Holz-Manttari and Christiane Nord. Katharina Reiss first emphasized the functional equivalence between the original text and the translated text [2]. Vermeer, established Skopostheorie, which takes "skopos rule" as the first law of Skopostheorie. Jsta Holz-Manttari established the behavioral translation theory, which argues that translation is a complex activity to achieve a specific

purpose. Christiane Nord considered how to guarantee the function of the original text under different purposes of target readers, and translators should systematically sort out various academic thoughts of functionalist translation theory.

2.2 About its three rules

The first rule is skopos rule, which means the purpose of translation. It comes from the participants of translation, which are translators, target readers and original authors. Firstly, the translator's purpose guides translating. Secondly, the target readers require the communicative functions, which means target texts should be comprehensible. Finally, the translation cannot apart from the original author's intention.

The second rule is coherence rule. It does not require complete consistency between the target text and the source text in terms of content and form. Moreover, for meeting the target readers' requirements for communicative function, the translation should express a complete meaning and conform to the linguistic and cultural habits of target language. However, if for a special purpose, translators can overlook the requirements of coherence rule.

The third rule is the fidelity rule. It requires translators to be faithful to the original text and the author. But it does not mean to translate word for word, but to reconcile the relationship between the translation purpose and the author's intention.

3 An introduction of culture-loaded words

Culture-loaded words embody the unique cultural connotation of a country and a nation. The long development history has laid a certain foundation for the formation of Chinese culture-loaded words.

3.1 The definition and function of culture-loaded words

The definition and functions of culture-loaded words are introduced as follows.

3.1.1 The definition of culture-loaded words

Culture-loaded words are the words coming from the development of a certain nation history and reflects the national cultural characteristics. In addition, some scholars refer to culture-loaded words as "lexical gap" from the perspective of the words' nature.

3.1.2 The functions of culture-loaded words

Culture-loaded words reflect the uniqueness to a culture. It is not only an integral part of the language, but also an important tool for cultural inheritance and communication.

3.2 The classification of culture-loaded words

Eugene Nida divided culture into five categories: ecological culture, material culture, religious culture, social culture and linguistic culture [3].

3.2.1 Ecological culture-loaded words

Ecological culture-loaded words refer to the words related to natural environment, geographical environment, animals and plants [3]. The ecological culture-loaded words in *Empresses in the Palace*, such as, "The crane's red crown", and "silk tree flowers".

3.2.2 Material culture-loaded words

Material culture-loaded words are the words related to specific objects, such as daily necessities, institutions, medicine and clothes [3]. In the *Empresses in the Palace*, the cases are the words as "Yangxin Hall", "Suiyu Pavilion".

3.2.3 Social culture-loaded words

Social culture-loaded words refer to social culture, such as the historical background, lifestyle, values, social status [3]. Some words in *Empresses in the Palace* like "Tai zi", "Noble Lady Cao".

3.2.4 Linguistic culture-loaded words

Linguistic culture-loaded words refer to expressions, words and usages rich in cultural connotation and national

characteristics [3]. Expressions are about allusions, four-character idioms, proverbs and allegorical sayings. Cases in the *Empresses in the Palace* like "Rabbits bite when they're pushed too far" and "Force a cattle to drink".

3.2.5 Religious culture-loaded words

Religious culture-loaded words are the words about all kinds of ideas, beliefs, substances and rituals related to religion [3]. This kind of words in *Empresses in the Palace*, such as "Buddha bless", "Son of Heaven", "Ganlu Temple".

4 The translation of culture-loaded words in the subtitles of *Empresses in the Palace* from the perspective of Skopostheorie

In the following part, some cases will be used to explain the English translation of culture-loaded words in *Empresses in the Palace* from the perspective of Skopostheorie.

4.1 The translation of ecological culture-loaded words

Source text: "Under the yellow spring"

Target text: "In the underworld"

"Under the yellow spring" refers to a place in where people arrive after they die. The translation guided by the free translation method is "in the underworld". "Free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original" [4]. According to the Skopostheorie, the "skopos rule" and "coherence rule" emphasize the communicative purpose and acceptability of the target text. The phrase "in the underworld" is usually used to express the post-death world in Western cultures. Typically, "underworld" means a place where the souls of the departed go or a realm of the dead. Obviously, "in the underworld" embodies the "coherence rule" and "skopos rule".

4.2 The translation of material culture-loaded words

Source text: "Yangxin Hall", "Suiyu Pavilion", "Taiyi Bureau"

Target text: "Yangxin Hall", "Suiyu Pavilion", "the Imperial Hospital/the Imperial Medical Bureau"

Most of the architectural material culture-loaded words are translated by transliteration method. Most of the names of Chinese classical buildings have specific meanings. The transliteration method also retains the language style of the original text to some extent, which reflects the "fidelity rule" of Skopostheorie. It not only expresses the content of the original text clearly, but also respects the source text. Words related to traditional Chinese medicine, such as "Taiyi Bureau", are very different from Western medical words. Translators adopt free translation method and translate "Taiyi Bureau" into "the Imperial Hospital/the Imperial Medical Bureau". Free translation retains the real meaning of "Taiyi Bureau" in the drama, which has pointed out that the institution was established for the royal family, and the translation reflects the "fidelity rule" to some extent.

4.3 The translation of social culture-loaded words

Source text: "Niu Hulu", "Wula Nala", "Aixin Jueluo"

Target text: "Niohuru", "Ula Nara", "Aisin Gioro"

These words are the royal family names of the Qing Dynasty, with distinct ethnic characteristics. The translator adopts the transliteration method, which preserves the phonetic and ethnic cultural characteristics of Chinese to a large extent. Moreover, the transliteration method adopted to the translation of surnames is helpful for target readers to know more information about Chinese family names culture, and can also promote the international influence of Chinese culture, which conforms to the "skopos rule" of Skopostheorie.

4.4 The translation of linguistic culture-loaded words

Source text: "Rabbits bite when they're pushed too far"

Target text: "A baited cat grows as fierce as a lion"

"Rabbits bite when they're pushed too far" means that a gentle rabbit will bite even if it is provoked. It refers to a very kind and gentle person will fight to the death if he was oppressed. There is no "rabbit" in the translation, but a "cat". The translator adopts the free translation method to present the huge strength difference between "cat" and "lion", so as to facilitate the target readers to understand the Chinese idiom and thus understand the character's personality. The free translation method emphasizes the communicative function of the target text. It reflects the "skopos rule" and "coherence rule".

4.5 The translation of religious culture-loaded words

Source text: "The mouth of the Buddha and the heart of the serpent"

Target text: "Honeyed words but evil intent"

"The mouth of the Buddha and the heart of the serpent" is used in Chinese culture to describe a person with a good tongue but a bad heart. The use of "The mouth of the Buddha " to describe good things also reflects the worship of Buddhism in ancient China. The target text adopted free translation without translating "Buddha", but expresses the real meanings of "The mouth of the Buddha and the heart of the serpent" as "Honeyed words but evil intent", which ensures the communicative purpose of the target text and it is easy for the target readers to understand, reflecting the "skopos rule" of Skopostheorie. In addition, the arrangement of the translation also fits the original text in the form of expression, which also reflects the "fidelity rule".

5 Conclusion

On the basis of the above-mentioned discussions, we may come to the conclusion that Skopostheorie does a great contribution to the translation of subtitle. However, the translation of culture-loaded words in subtitles requires careful selection of translation strategies and methods.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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