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Abstract

Against the general background of globalization, cultural exchange among countries has been on the rise. As a particular form of culture, films are playing an increasingly important role in transferring values, ideas and information of a particular culture. Subtitled films can give the target audiences an access to the foreign language and its culture. As a new field of translation, the study of film subtitle translation is attracting more and more attention.

This thesis views subtitle translation as intercultural communications, introducing the SC (source culture) to the TC (target culture) by bridging the gap between two cultures. And the translator should take on a new role of "cultural mediator"¹. Applying the *Skopostheorie* to "translate culture"² in subtitle translation, this study aims at improving the strategies of adequate translation in terms of cultural information transfer in subtitling.

According to the *Skopostheorie*, subtitle translation is a purposeful activity. The *skopos* or purpose of subtitle translation is a decisive factor, which influences the translator's choosing proper strategies. The basic aim of subtitle is to inform, offering adequate information about what is happening in the film within the constraints of time and space. By providing the audience with concise and easily understandable subtitles, subtitle translation fulfils itself as a smooth and easy communication between the film and the target audience.

Hoping to raise the awareness of cultural information in subtitle translation on the part of translators, the author focuses on translation strategies choosing in translating culture in the process. With regard to the study of culture, this thesis believes that culture can be subdivided and analyzed, introducing Professor Liu Miqing's viewpoint of cultural levels to study the distribution of cultural information in subtitle translation, which is helpful both for the studies and for the practice of subtitle translation.

Analyzing the application of the two well-known strategies, domestication and foreignization, the author puts forward a set of techniques to deal with specific issues of

¹ The term is taken from Bochner (1981).

² The term is taken from Katan (2004).



cultural information transfer, making a descriptive-explanatory study of their applications on each cultural level with case study of subtitle translation practices. This study finally concludes that the *Skopostheorie* finds its way to guide and fulfill the task of intercultural communication effectively in subtitle translation.

Key Words: subtitle translation; the *Skopostheorie*; translating cultures; translation strategy



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1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

With the trend of globalization, intercultural communications are becoming increasingly important. To develop cultural awareness is essential for any successful cross-cultural communications. When information about other cultures and other parts of the world increases to a certain point, people will demand a truer presentation of the foreign elements and to see what they have never experienced before in their own language and culture. Films, different from other mass media, can directly deliver the original flavor of the source language and the SC. Subtitle translation is destined to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers, conveying the most relevant message and cultural information to TC audiences, and successful subtitles can give audiences a chance to learn more about the foreign culture.

However, the studies of cultural transfer in film subtitle translation are far from being satisfying. Few books and articles touch upon this specific area—English-Chinese film subtitle translation. In the *Chinese Translators Journal* published in the past decade, just three articles are found to deal with this issue.

By drawing on the *Skopostheorie*, this thesis focuses on the issue of cultural information transfer in subtitle translation, combined with the study of cultural level, analyzing the strategies and techniques of translating culture on each level, aiming at improving cultural communication in subtitles.

1.2 Research issues and thesis structure

This study is a target-oriented product research, focusing on a descriptive and explanatory analysis of examples in which choice of translation strategies of cultural information is involved. The research is conducted in the light of the *Skopostheorie* to find out proper strategies and techniques to deal with cultural information in subtitle translation.

This paper consists of five chapters: 1) introduction, 2) literature review, 3)



theoretical consideration on subtitle translation, 4) translating culture in subtitle translation, 5) conclusion.

Chapter 1 introduces the background of this research. Chapter 2 reviews the previous research in subtitle translation. Chapter 3 tries to find theoretical consideration on subtitle translation, that is, the *Skopostheorie* and to obtain the working principles of subtitle translation under the guidance of *Skopostheorie*. Chapter 4 focuses on translating cultures in subtitle translation. Based on the study of cultural level, this paper conducts a tentative study on strategies and techniques choosing in translating cultural information on different cultural levels from the *Skopostheorie*. Chapter 5 makes a conclusion of the paper.

1.3 Methodology and data selection

A descriptive-explanatory method is employed in this study.

This thesis examines the issue of cultural information in subtitle translation. To meet the requirement of this study, examples of subtitle translation are carefully selected out from a large number of films.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Overseas studies of film subtitle translation

It should be acknowledged that European scholars take the lead in the studies of film subtitle translation.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the first academic works dealing with AVT (audio-visual translation) made its appearance. The edition of the magazine *Babel*, under the title *Cinéma et traduction* published in 1960, marks a symbolic starting. At first, most articles were limited to discussions on certain phenomenon without systematic study. The golden age of film translation came in the 1990s, and there appeared a real revolution in this field, especially since 1995 when the 100th film anniversary was celebrated. Fruitful achievements have been made.

As a leading figure in this period, Gambier focused on the classification of film translation modes, the skills of would-be translators and the reception of AVT. Collaborating with Henrik Gottlieb, they edited a book: *(Multi) media Translation: Concepts, Practices, and Research*. The book is divided into three sections: "Concepts", "Policies and Practices" and "Empirical Research". While some topics in the book may overlap, each article offers a fascinating look at the various aspects of multimedia translation.

Later on, Gottlieb began his career in the study of subtitle translation in the 1990s. He conducted a theoretical study of this field, covering many grounds, from the definition and constraints of subtitle translation, the linguistic dimension of subtitles, and the translation of idioms from English into Danish, to the teaching of subtitle translation and, the strategies for subtitle translation. His study is almost all-inclusive, and provides a theoretical basis for future research.

Ivarsson, in his book *Subtitle Translation for the Media* (1992), offers a very detailed history of the technical aspect of subtitle translation and an overview of subtitle translation for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. In her doctoral dissertation, Tomaszkiwicz(1993) focuses on the linguistic operations which underlie the practice of subtitling, and carries out a detailed analysis of the two strategies that characterize film subtitling: elimination and condensation. Kovačič's (1994) focus point of research is



linguistic aspects of subtitle translation by applying the theory of relevance to the study. Dirk Delabastita carried out research on the norms that underlie translation behavior and paid more attention to the cultural elements in translation.

To go beyond the linguistic level and to set AVT firmly in the target culture, Karamitroglou (2000) makes use of up-to-date translation concepts and applies them to the field of AVT, extending their functionality and expanding the possibilities of study in our field to the professional, commercial and product reception dimensions. In his doctoral thesis, *Towards a Methodology for the Investigation of Norms in Audiovisual Translation*, he proposes a model of analysis that he himself applies, in a case study, to find out the preliminary norms that determine the choice of subtitling or dubbing when translating children's programmes in Greece by using concepts such as polysystem and norms.

Besides, there are translation journals and magazines in this field offering a platform for further discussion and study. For instance, *Translation Journal* and *Metal, Babel, Perspectives: Studies in Transology*. ESIST (European Association for Studies in Screen Translation) serves as a meeting and reference point for researchers, teachers and professionals of AVT.

2.2 Studies of film subtitle translation in China

While in China, it is another picture. Compared with the researches done overseas, the investigations of this field in China are far from being satisfactory. Not a single work can be found thus far; only a few articles have been published.

Zhang Chunbo (1998) takes films as an audiovisual art that serves mass audiences. He points out that translation of films should center on the target audiences, therefore, translators should take into consideration how well target audiences know the source language and its culture. Applying Nida's functional equivalence to the study of film translation, he suggests that the translation method adopted should be free translation. To deal with cultural items in film translation, he stands for domesticating, abandoning the original images and replacing them with those the Chinese audiences are familiar with.

In his article *Strategies for Translating Subtitles*, Professor Li Yunxing (2001) states that the primary requirement of subtitle translation is to provide, within the constraints of time and space, the most relevant information in the most effective way. The article



analyzes the features of subtitle translation in terms of time-space constraints, informative function and cultural elements, and then puts forward corresponding strategies for translation.

Qian Shaochang (2000), an experienced film subtitle translator, has conducted a practical research, entitled *Audiovisual Translation—An Important Area in the Field of Translation Studies*. He stated his argument and testified to some principles for audiovisual translation set by himself.

Combined with her personal experience, Zhao Chunmei (2002) has done profound research on film translation. In her paper, *Translation into Chinese of Film Scripts and Scripts of TV drama series – Four Main Conflicting Demands*, she analyzes four conflicting demands in film translation-- length of translation and the original content; word order and the sequence of moving pictures; domestication and foreignization methods. In her opinion, as an important means of cultural exchange and showcase of foreign culture, foreign films contain heavily culture-loaded images and culture-specific phenomena; therefore, translators should try their best to retain the original unique language expressions, metaphors, allusions, peoples' names, etc. As for the translation method, she believes that translators should try to use the literal method; only when it is not workable, should translators resort to the free translation method to achieve equivalence with the original texts.

Subtitle translation can be seen as the best way to introduce the beauty of source language (English) and its culture. Therefore, scholars have noticed the importance and urgency of film subtitle translation. Chinese scholars focused their researches on the principles and strategies of film subtitle translation. On the contrary, foreign scholars analyze film translation from much broader perspectives, such as linguistics, pragmatics, as well as state basic principles that lay basis for further studies.

Though more people have started study and research in this field in China, few of them do it systematically. With regard to culture translating in film subtitle translation, some scholars have noticed the issue of culture transferring in translation process, but their studies are done without any theoretical basis, not to say systematic analysis. The study of cultural information transfer in English film subtitle translation still has a long way to go.



3. Theoretical Consideration on Film Subtitle Translation

3.1 Exploration of the *Skopostheorie*

Presented by German functionalist Katharina Reiss, the *Skopostheorie* is represented by Hans J. Vermeer and Charistiane Nord. The *Skopostheorie* views translating as a purposeful activity, which focuses on the aim of translation. The priority of translation used to be put on the source text by various theories; in contrast, the *Skopostheorie* shifts its attention to the target text.

"The 1970s and 1980s saw a move away from the static linguistic typologies of translation shifts and the emergence and flourishing in Germany of a functionalist and communicative to the analysis of translation" (Munday, 2001:73).

The German school of functionalist translation theory can be regarded as a historical breakthrough against and an important supplement to the traditional notion of "equivalence".

In 1971, Reiss first put forward a new model of translation criticism on the basis of the functional relationship between the source and target texts, or the particular purpose of a translation activity. In her book *Possibilities and Limits of Translation Criticism*, which may be regarded as the starting point for the academic analysis of translation in Germany, Reiss introduces a functional category into her "objective approach to translation criticism". Communicative function, as well as conceptual content and linguistic form are the three elementary part of an ideal translation according to Reiss. However, Reiss's theory is more or less similar to Nida's functional equivalence, because it is founded on the basis of equivalence.

Vermeer, another German translation theorist who advocates Reiss' theory, has pointed out that the translation purpose or function of a translation acts as a general principle. It is generally agreed now that translation is a type of human action. According to Vermeer, human action is intentional and purposeful behavior that takes place in a given situation, which modifies the situation at the same time.

In 1984, Reiss and Vermeer formally stated the *Skopostheorie* in their co-authored book *General Foundations of Translation Theory*. They questioned the traditional



concept of “equivalence” and suggested the more universal one “adequacy”. They found that there exist situations in which equivalence is not possible and not even desired in some cases. The framework of Vermeer’s *Skopostheorie* is the following:

Any form of translational action, including therefore translation itself, maybe conceived as an action, as the name implies. Any action has an aim, a purpose. [...] The word *Skopos*, then, is a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation. [...] Further: an action leads to a result, a new situation or event, and possibly to a ‘new’ object. (Nord 2001:11-12)

In Vermeer’s *Skopostheorie*, a theory of purposeful action, one of the most important factors that determine a translation purpose is the addressee—the intended receiver or audience in the target language and culture with expectations and communicative needs. As Vermeer puts it, to translate is “to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstance” (ibid, 2001:12). We notice that Vermeer makes no mention of the source text, thus the status of the source text is obviously lower than the target text in the *Skopostheorie*. What *Skopostheorie* emphasizes is not the function of the original, but the function or set of functions the target text is intended to achieve.

Justa Holz-Manttari further developed the *Skopostheorie*. She defines translation as “a complex action designed to achieve a particular purpose”, and the purpose of “translational action” is to transfer messages across culture and language barriers by means of transmitters produced by translator (ibid:13).

In the early 1990s, Christiane Nord put forward a new concept of “function + loyalty.” On the basis of the theories of Reiss, Vermeer, and Holz-Manttari, Nord defines translation as the production of a functional text, which tries to specify the intended or demanded function of the target text. In this definition, emphasis is laid on the relationship between the source and target texts. Nord also suggests a set of principles as what elements of a source text in a particular context can be reserved, and what should or can be rewritten.

3.1.1 Basic concepts of the *Skopostheorie*

The Greek word *Skopos* means “purpose”. According to the *Skopostheorie*, “one form of behavior is nevertheless held to be more appropriate than the other in order to



attain the intended goal or purpose” (Nord, 2001: 27). The term *Skopos* usually refers to the purpose of the target text.

In his theory, Vermeer also uses related words other than *Skopos*, namely aim, purpose, intention and function; however, there are some distinctions between these concepts:

Aim is defined as the final results an agent intends to achieve by means of an action.

Purpose is defined as a provisional stage in the process of attaining an aim. Aim and purpose are thus relative concepts.

Function refers to what text means or is intended to mean from the receiver's point of view, whereas the aim is the purpose for which it is needed or supposed to be needed.

Intention is conceived as an aim-oriented plan of action. The term intention is also equated with function of the action (Nord, 2001: 27).

Vermeer believes these four terms are equal and can be subsumed under the generic concept of *Skopos*. Christian Nord further draws a basic distinction between intention and function, which is proved to be very useful and helpful in the translation studies. Nord points out that intention and function should be viewed from two different angles in translation. Intention is sender-oriented, which means that it is based on sender's point of view “who wants to achieve a certain purpose with the text” (ibid). While function is receiver-oriented, and it indicates that the receiver will use the text with a certain function based on his “expectation, needs, previous knowledge and situational conditions” (ibid). Nord thinks that in the translation field, as the receiver and the sender live in “two different cultural and situational settings” (ibid), the intention of the sender may not correspond with the function which is adopted by the receiver.

Thus to bear this distinction is extremely important and necessary for the translator.

3.1.2 Three rules of the *Skopostheorie*

3.1.2.1 *Skopos* rule

The dominant role for any translation is thus the *Skopos* rule, which means that a translational action is determined by its *Skopos*; that is, “the end justifies the means” (Reiss & Vermeer 1984: 101). Vermeer's further explanation of the *Skopos* is as follows:



“each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The *Skopos* rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function” (Vermeer, 1989: 20). Most translational actions allow a variety of *Skopos*, which may be related to one another in a hierarchical order. The translator should be able to justify his or her choice of a particular *Skopos* in a given translational situation.

This rule is intended to solve the eternal dilemmas of free vs. faithful translation, dynamic vs. formal equivalence, good interpreters vs. slavish translators, and so on. It means that the *Skopos* of a particular translation task may require a “free” or a “faithful” translation, or anything between these two extremes, depending on the purpose for which the translation is needed. A common misunderstanding that a good translation should conform or adapt to target-culture behavior or expectations should be avoided.

3.1.2.2 Intratextual coherence

In Vermeer's terms, the target text should conform to the standard of intratextual coherence (also called coherence rule), which concerns the relation between the target text and the situation where it is received and specifies that a translation should be acceptable in a sense that is coherent with the receivers' situation.

The standard of intratextual coherence indicates that the translation should be acceptable, understandable in the communicative situation and culture in which it is received. This term can be understood in the light of *Skopos* as function: whether the translation can function properly according to the *Skopos* is measured by the extent of intratextual coherence. That is, the more coherent the information in the translation with the target situation and culture, the better the translation is able to function in the target culture. Whether the translation can function properly in the target situation to provide the audience with information depends on how much intratextual coherence the translator is able to achieve. Thus, translator should decide what specific principles or strategies to be used under the guidance of the *Skopos*.

3.1.2.3 Intertextual coherence

Intertextual coherence concerns the relation between the source text and target text, from which fidelity rule has been elicited.

Because a translation is an offer of information about the information originally



offered within another culture, it is natural that the target text and its corresponding source text keep some kind of relationship. According to Vermeer, this relationship is called "intertextual coherence" or "fidelity". This is regarded as a further principle---the "fidelity rule". What matters is that the intertextual coherence should exist between source and target text, and its form depends on both the translator's interpretation about the source text and the translation *Skopos*.

Among these three rules, intertextual coherence is considered subordinate to intratextual coherence, and both intertextual coherence and intratextual coherence are subordinate to the *Skopos* rule.

3.1.3 Evaluation on the *Skopostheorie*

By stressing purpose and function in translation, the *Skopostheorie* brings a new perspective to translation studies. Compared to the traditional formal and predominantly linguistic translation theories, it reflects "a more functionally and socio-culturally oriented concept of translation" (Baker, 1998: 35).

The *Skopostheorie* defines translation as an intentional, interpersonal, partly verbal intercultural interaction based on a source text instead of treating translation as a one-to-one transference between two languages. It highlights the involvement of multiple personal and cultural factors in the process of translation, enhances people's awareness of the complexity, constraints and relations involved in translation. In this way the *Skopostheorie* has widened the scope of translation studies and moved beyond the linguistic boundary. Attention is called to those factors involved in the process of translation and determining the result of translation. With due attention given to the relationships of the author, reader and translator, internal and external factors that condition the shaping of a translation, this approach to translation studies proves to be more descriptive and pragmatic, and shifts from the "hypothetical ideal translations to actual texts" (Gentzer, 2004: 76).

3.1.3.1 Change of the status of ST (Source Text) and TT (Target Text)

As the source text is just an offer of information, it is not the supreme yardstick for translation evaluation. The target text becomes the focus. The translator can adapt his or her translation strategies according to the translation purpose, that is to say, the translator is released from the "restrictions imposed by a narrowly defined concept of loyalty to the



source text alone" (Baker, 2004:238). Thus translation is essentially a result of strategies selecting and a decision making process.

3.1.3.2 Flexibility in choosing translation strategies

According to the *Skopos* rule, the translator should translate by the purpose and function of the target text. To determine the translation purpose and accordingly the translation strategies is decisive. Due to different purposes, translators can choose different strategies for translating the same text. Translation methods can be variable due to different purposes the translator intends to achieve. The *Skopostheorie* calls for different strategies in different translation situations. In this sense, the *Skopostheorie* takes a more tolerant attitude to translation practices, especially those that are against the existing translation criteria but may lead to a satisfactory and successful outcome.

3.2. Study on subtitle translation

3.2.1 Definition of subtitle translation

Henrik Gottlieb (2001: 311), a leading figure in subtitle translation, says that it is a unique form of translation. Compared with other definitions of subtitle translation, his definition may be the most exhaustive: subtitle translation is "a (1) written, (2) additive, (3) immediate, (4) synchronous and (5) polymedia translation". He further explains these five points in detail:

- (1) being of a **written**--as opposed to a spoken-nature, subtitle translation differs from all other types of audiovisual translation.
- (2) the label **additive** indicates that verbal material is added to the original, retaining the source-language discourse.
- (3) the label **synchronous** reflects the fact that the original work (with or without the original dialogue) and the translation are presented simultaneously--unlike "simultaneous" interpreting, where the interpreter always lags behind.
- (4) the term **fleeting** refers to the fact that, in filmic media, all discourse is presented in a flowing manner, beyond the control of the receptor.
- (5) the term **poly-semiotic** states the fact that the target language rendering only covers one of several interacting channels of communication in the



translated version.

Gottlieb makes further efforts to distinguish different forms of subtitle translation, linguistically and technically. From a linguistic viewpoint, there is intralingual and interlingual translation, of which interlingual translation is between two different languages for audiences to overcome language barriers. On the technical aspect, subtitles can be either open or closed, of which open subtitles are something inserted onto the film images and cannot be removed from the screen. The target text constitutes a physical part of the translated film and is transmitted together with the film sound and picture.

In this study, film subtitle translation refers to interlingual (English--Chinese) and open subtitle translation.

3.2.2 Features and constraints of subtitle translation

Although regarded as a branch of translation, subtitle translation differs greatly from translation of other text types. The main **distinctions** may lie in the following aspects:

a. Polysemiotic

In films, the meaning is not generated by verbal signs only. It is through four channels that the meaning is generated:

- 1) the verbal auditory channel, including dialogue, background voices and sometimes lyrics;
- 2) the non-verbal auditory channel, including music, natural sound and sound effects;
- 3) the verbal visual channel: including superimposed titles and written signs on the screen;
- 4) the non-verbal visual channel: picture composition and flow (Ivarsson, 1998: 245).

According to Gottlieb, there are monosemiotic and polysemiotic in message conveying: printed or written materials are "monosemiotic" through only verbal visual channel; while subtitled films are "polysemiotic" in meaning transmission through the above four channels. In other words, linguistic information conveyed in the subtitles is only part of the entire message. Thus the translator in subtitle translation should take all these four channels into consideration to achieve synchronization between the subtitle and the flowing image.



b. Diasemiotic

There are two types of translation: if a translation uses the same channel – or set of channels – as the original, it is an “isosemiotic” translation; if it uses different channels, the result will be a “diasemiotic” translation. Subtitle translation is “diasemiotic”, which involves a transfer from verbal audio channel to verbal visual channel, that is to say, a switch from oral discourse to written text. As we know, oral speeches differ from written texts. For one thing, written texts are more organized and condensed, and typically have a higher lexical density than spoken discourses, and tend to give rise to a greater economy of expression. For another, “written texts typically favor the informative function; while in dialogues, it is often the interpersonal function that is important, especially when nothing new is said” (Kovačič, 1996: 107).

The transition from oral speeches to written texts results in a blemish in subtitle translation itself. The various dialects, idiolects, colloquialisms that are frequently used in film lines usually fail to emerge in subtitles. Their absence in subtitles may result in a painful loss in the effect of character portrayal. For example, Prissy, the little Negro girl in the movie *Gone with the Wind*, speaks ungrammatical English, but in subtitles it is hard to capture such features.

Example 1)

Prissy: *I knows! I knows! I knows* how to do it. I've done it lots and lots. Let me doctor, let me. I can do everything. (from *Gone with the Wind*)

碧茜：我知道！我知道！我全知道！我做过好多次了，让我来做吧。我全都会做。

Constraints of subtitle translation

Titford points out “the problems encountered in subtitling derive essentially from the constraints imposed on the translator by the medium itself” (Diaz-Cintas 1999:32). According to Guardini Paola (1998:97), the two technical constraints in subtitle translation refer to “...time and space of presentation, imposed by the original”.

“Space constraints mainly stem from the size of the screen and the minimum letter-size legible to average viewers” (Gottlieb 1992:164). It is acknowledged that there should be no more than two lines for English subtitles each time. While some scholar argues that a one-liner allows a maximum of 35 English words and a two-liner 70 words, some advocate no more than 40 English words per line (de Linde & Kay 1999: 9). When it comes to Chinese subtitles, both Qu Jianlong, a translation professor of City University



of Hong Kong, and Shu Kei, a veteran filmmaker and distributor in Hong Kong, agree that double lines in Chinese are not feasible, and there should be only one-liner each time. As for the maxim characters per line, their opinions are slightly different: Qu proposes the number of no more than 13 (区剑龙, 1991: 337), while Shu Kei advocates the maxim of 14, including punctuation marks.

Temporal constraints basically stem from the need for synchronicity between subtitles and oral speeches, and the reading speed of viewers (de Linde & Kay, 1999:6). Generally speaking, the speed at which subtitles appear and disappear is decided by the length of time of oral utterance. Zoe de Linde and Neil Kay argue that “the disappearance of each subtitle should coincide roughly with the end of the corresponding speech segment, since those remaining too long on screen are likely to be re-read by viewers” (de Linde & Kay, 1999:15). As for the appearance of subtitles, the synchronicity between subtitles and oral speeches is not as strict as that of the disappearance of subtitles. There may be leading and lagging. Leading and lagging refer to “the lapse in time between the appearance of a subtitle and the start of a corresponding speech segment. When a subtitle precedes the speech, it is called lead time; if a subtitle follows the speech, it is referred to as lag time” (ibid).

To define an average reading speed of audiences is very difficult. For one reason, the quantity and complexity of linguistic information in subtitles will definitely influence the reading speed; for another, the visual information on the screen will also have some impact on audiences' reading (黄琛琪, 2007:15).

From the study of the constraints of subtitle translation, we know under what kind of circumstances subtitle translation is done. And the task that falls on the translator is to produce a translation meaningful to the audiences with the physical space of the frame and the temporal length of the utterance.

3.3 Application of the *Skopostheorie* to subtitle translation

3.3.1 Subtitle translation as intercultural communication

In *Theory of Translational Action*, Holz-Mabttari regards translating as a form of translational interaction, intentional interaction, interpersonal interaction and a communicative action, intercultural action and a text-processing action (quoted in Nord,



2001:16-25). Compared with the term “translation”, Holz-Mabttari preferred to use “message transmitters”, which consists of textual material combined with other media such as pictures, sounds and body movements.

According to the translational action model, translation is defined as purpose-driven, outcome-oriented human interaction and the aim of translation is to transfer message across culture and language barriers. “It is not about translating words, sentences or texts but is in every case about guiding the intended co-operation over cultural barriers enabling functionally oriented communication” (Munday’s translation, 1984:7-8).

To serve as a starting point of this study of subtitle translation, we focus on the purpose and function of film subtitle translation, intercultural communication.

“To have a culture means to have communication and to have communication means to have access to a language” (Duranti, 1997:332). Successful intercultural communication requires that participants involved understand each other both linguistically and culturally.

Enlightened by the translational action theory, we can view film subtitle translation as an intentional interaction with the intention to help audiences have a better understanding of films, as well as an intercultural communication where the translator takes on the task of transferring message and cultural information between two different cultures.

3.3.2 *Skopos* of subtitle translation

In Vermeer’s viewpoint, there are three kinds of purposes in translation: the general purpose aimed at by the translator in the translation process (perhaps to earn a living), the communicative purpose aimed at by the target text in the target situation (perhaps to instruct the reader) and the purpose aimed at by a particular translation strategy or procedure (for example, to translate literally in order to show the structural particularities of the source language) (Nord, 2001: 28).

In most studies on translation, it is usually taken for granted that all purposes of translators doing translation go with the first one in Nord’s summarization. In this paper, we will focus on the other two purposes of translation: subtitle, as the target text in intercultural communication, aims to convey the most relevant messages of the film to achieve the communicative purpose, that is, to facilitate the Chinese audiences’



understanding and acceptance of the film. With the constraints of time and space, translators choose translation strategies to enable the subtitles to function in the most effective way.

In subtitle translation, the *Skopos* of subtitle, co-determined by the director's intention and audience's expectation as well as the technical constraints imposed on subtitle translation tends to be informative. Its emphasis should be placed on message delivery rather than description or explanation so as to facilitate viewing. Subtitles must firstly be internally coherent enough, i.e., the subtitles cannot be self-contradictory, so that it can be accepted by the Chinese audiences. Secondly, it must fit in with the cultural situation of the Chinese audiences so that it can be accepted in the limited viewing time and space. The translator must provide information relevant to the original dialogues so that viewers know what's happening on the screen. The degree of coherence between subtitle and the dialogues of addressees' is determined by the *Skopos* of the subtitled movies.

Applying the *Skopos* rule to English-language film subtitle translation, we will figure out that the purpose of film subtitle translation is to aid the audiences with well-translated subtitles which can contribute to a good understanding of what is happening on the screen and thus to carry out a smooth communication between the film and the target audiences. In order to fulfill this goal, the translator's task is to apply suitable principles and strategies of translation, to provide audiences with clear and concise subtitles with the constraints of time and space.

3.4 Principles of subtitle translation

In the framework of the *Skopostheorie*, one of the most important factors determining the purpose of a translation is the addressee, who is the intended receiver or audience of the target text with their culture-specific world-knowledge, their expectation and their communicative needs. Every translation is directed at an intended audience, since to translate means "to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances" (Nord, 2001:12).

As we can see, the *Skopostheorie* maintains that the receiver/addressee as the main factor determining the target-text *Skopos*. In the process of film subtitle translation, the target audiences are regarded as a decisive factor. Hence, we may conclude that the



purposes of subtitle translation lie with how to achieve the best effect among the target audiences and try to offer them adequate information, in terms of both culture and character portrayal.

The basic aim of subtitle is to inform, offering adequate information about what is happening in the film. By providing audiences with concise and easily understandable subtitles, subtitle translation fulfils itself as a smooth and easy communication between the film and the target audiences. Consequently, two basic working principles in this purposeful translation activity are conciseness and adequacy.

3.4.1 Conciseness

As a tool to help viewers overcome language barriers for the enjoyment of foreign films, subtitles should not become the primary focus of the audiences. On the contrary, the *skopos* of subtitle translation should be to provide the audiences only the gist of dialogues, guaranteeing a quick reading and leaving as much time as possible for the audiences to concentrate on the image. Thus the function of translated subtitles determines that the primary principle of subtitles is conciseness.

Owing to the constraints of time and space in subtitling, many experts and professionals consider reduction as the main approach to the translation of subtitle. Therefore, subtitling is also called “the reductive form of translation (de Linde, 1995, quoted by Li Yunxin, 2001)” or “constrained translation (Diaz-Cintas, 1999, quoted by Li Yunxin, 2001)”.

Hazel R. Morgan (2001: 163) said, “If the viewers see too much text on screen, they’ll switch off”. Indeed, if each subtitle is a long and verbatim rendition, it will take more time and efforts for viewers to process the linguistic information. The main function of subtitling is to inform, so choosing the most relevant information should be the main concern in the process of subtitling a film. In this sense, a briefer rendering is always more desirable since they should allow quick reading and leave as much time as possible for viewers to concentrate on the image. Sometimes, even a simple sentence may be made shorter.

Example 2):

Jack: I was wonderin’ if you were needing any help this summer.

Version A: 我想问问看您今年夏天要找人帮忙吗?



Version B: 夏天你缺什么帮手吗?

(from *Brokeback mountain*)

Example 3)

The coldest weather on record has thrown the city into chaos.

Version A: 有史以来最寒冷的天气造成这城市一片混乱。

Version B: 史无前例的低温造成一团混乱。

(from *The Day after Tomorrow*)

From these two examples of subtitle translation, it is evident that Versions B are briefer and concise, thus more desirable to Chinese audiences.

Apart from the technical constraints, the polysemiotic nature of films and the idiosyncrasies of oral speeches also lead to text reduction. From the polysemiotic feature of subtitle translation, we know that there are altogether four channels to have messages conveyed in subtitled films. Subtitles may make no sense to viewers without the participation of the non-verbal visual, verbal and non-verbal audio channels. The information transmitted via subtitles may also be conveyed through the other three channels. In viewing a film, viewers process the image information simultaneously when reading subtitles. The loss of information caused by text reduction can be compensated by the message conveyed through the other channels. Thus, it is safe for translators to leave out the redundant elements. Gottlieb refers to these redundant elements as intersemiotic redundancy.

According to Gottlieb, oral speeches are characterized by filler words, repetition, tautologies, tag questions, false starts, stammer and self-correction, etc, which are termed "intrasemiotic redundancy". He says, "Especially with spontaneous speech, not only the informative content, but also the verbal style and characterization of the speaker are better served with some reduction in the subtitles. Deliberate speeches, including script based narration, often contains so much redundancy that a slight condensation may enhance the effectiveness of the intended message" (Gottlieb, 1998: 247).

Omitting these "intrasemiotic redundancy" will not cause the shrink of meaning, since the image and soundtrack remain basically unaltered in subtitled films, other channels can also compensate the lost information.

Example 4)

Forrest: *You know* it's funny what a young man recollects.

(from *Forrest Gump*)

年轻人的记忆很奇怪



Example 5)

- Walter. It's quite a formal name, *isn't it?* (from *Sleepless in Seattle*)
- 华特, 蛮正式的名字。

3.4.2 Adequacy

Within the framework of the *Skopostheorie*, how can we make an evaluation on the end product after so many decision-making in the process? And what can be regarded as fulfilling the *Skopos* of a translation task?

According to the *Skopostheorie*, the intended purposes of the target text determine the translation strategies and the criterion for translation evaluation is "adequacy" instead of "equivalence". Adequacy refers to the qualities of a target text with regard to the translation purpose; translation should be adequate to the translation purpose. Compared with equivalence, adequacy is a dynamic concept since it is related to the process of translation action and referring to the "goal-oriented selection of signs that are considered as appropriate for the communicative purpose defined in the translation assignment" (Chesterman, 1989: 15). Equivalence, on the other hand is a static, result-oriented concept describing a relationship of equal communicative value between texts or, on lower ranks, between words, phrases, sentences, syntactic structures and so on. Equivalence in this theory only refers to "functional equivalence" on the text level, and it means adequacy to a purpose which requires the same communicative functions between the target text and the source text. Equivalence may be one possible aim when translating but it can not be held to be a translation principle valid once and for all. In this way, equivalence is subject to adequacy and determined by *Skopos*.

In the light of the *Skopostheorie*, purpose is essential in the evaluation of function. Translation is defined to be adequate or inadequate with regard to the purpose or the communicative function it is supposed to achieve.

In this paper, adequacy as a principle of subtitle translation is fulfilled through two aspects: in terms of character portrayal, adequacy in delivering the individuality of the character is also desirable. In a sense, subtitle translation requires a successful transfer of the individuality of the characters in the films. Translator should make great efforts to keep the same effect in character portrayal.

Example 6)



Scarlet: Sir, you are no gentleman.

Rhett: And you miss are no lady. Don't think that I hold that against you. Ladies have never held any charm for me.

Scarlet: First you take a low, common advantage of me, then you insult me!

Rhett: I mean it as a compliment. And I hope to see more of you when you're free of the spell of the elegant Mr. Wilkes. He doesn't strike me as half good enough for a girl of your...what was it...your passion for living?

Scarlet: How dare you! You aren't fit to wipe his boot!

Rhett: And you were going to hate him for the rest of your life.

(from *Gone with the Wind*)

思佳丽：先生，你可真不是一个君子。

瑞德：小姐，你也不是淑女。不过我不会以此要挟你的。我对淑女从不感兴趣。

思佳丽：你先是不光彩地占我的便宜，还侮辱我。

瑞德：我是想赞美你，而且我希望你从这位高尚的威尔克斯先生的魔咒下解脱后会多多见到你。在我看来，你这样的女孩，他连一半也配不上。你那种，什么，对生命的热情？

思佳丽：你真太大胆了！你连替他擦鞋也不配！

瑞德：那你是要恨他一辈子了！

Scarlet, the heroine of *Gone with the Wind*, is a strong-minded, brave, capable and passionate female. The above dialogue is between her and Butler when they first meet, and it vividly conveys her individuality. Faced with Rhett's acid and teasing words, Scarlet never compromises and gives in. Instead, she pays him back in his own coin and insults him. "先生，你可真不是一个君子", "你真太大胆了！你连替他擦鞋也不配!". If "aren't fit to" is simply and faithfully translated to "适合", Scarlet would lose her individuality in the eyes of Chinese audiences, and turns out to be a plain character. By purposefully translated to "不配", it fulfills the adequacy of transfer on the level of character portrayal, definitely leaving a deep impression on audiences.

To fulfill the purpose of intercultural communication, successful transfer of cultural information in subtitle translation can help the audiences better understand the story, as



well as meet the need of getting to know something about English-language culture on the part of Chinese audiences.

Example 7) Jane: Shouting won't help, Mr. Clayton. He doesn't understand English.

Clayton: Then I'll make him understand. If I can teach a parrot to sing

"God Save the Queen", I can certainly teach this savage a thing or two.

(from *Tarzan*)

简：对他叫没有用，他不知道你在说什么。

柯灵顿：那我画给他看。我能教鹦鹉唱国歌，我就能教他。

"God Save the Queen" is the British national anthem, which most Chinese people may not know, but they may be interested to know. To translate it to "国歌" would be just comprehensible, succeeding in translating the meaning. To render it into "神佑我女王（国歌）" will transfer the adequate cultural information to the Chinese audiences.



Chapter 4 Translating Cultures in Subtitle Translation

In Chapter 3, we have discussed the working principles of subtitle translation. With no regard to the constraints of time and space, redundant subtitles will be negative in TC audiences' appreciating; however, lack of adequate information cannot achieve the purpose of helping, either. We believe that a balance between these two principles with the chain of constraints is desirable, thus choosing the appropriate strategy is involved. In Chapter 4, we will focus on the strategies of translating culture in subtitle translation.

4.1 Culture and subtitle translation

Nida (1991:105) defines culture as "the totality of beliefs and practices of a society", which consists of "external (e.g. artifacts, roles, institutions) and internal representations (e.g. values, attitudes...and epistemologies)." As a particular kind of cultural product, films carry and reflect the culture as a whole, and everything shown on the screen can be a form of social and cultural interaction in a particular cultural context.

Therefore, films are influential on our perception and appreciation of the foreign culture. It should be noted that since people nowadays have easier access to foreign films on the Internet, films play an increasingly important part in cultural exchange at different levels.

Subtitled films are preferred in China mainly because foreign language and its culture are directly exposed to the Chinese audiences, which offer them a chance to know more about foreign cultures and languages.

Language can not be separated from culture, and language is the vehicle of culture. Therefore translation is not the transfer of literal meaning alone, but exchange and communication between two different cultures. Just as Nida (1993: 110) points out: "for truly successful translating, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function." Like the translation of other text types, subtitle translation must be done across linguistic and cultural barriers.

Cultural difference can cause cultural barriers in subtitle translation. In the



Skopostheorie, culture also plays a very important role in translation, and further subtitle translation.

4.1.1 Culture-specificity and foreign culture marker

Culture-specificity

In discussing the *Skopostheorie*, Nord puts special emphasis on culture-specificity. The discrimination of a particular culture depends largely on the cognition of the culture-specificity of its culture as opposed to that of another. Against the background of intercultural communication, it is because of relative culture-specificity that the culture of one community means certain value to the members of another community.

Foreign cultural markers

“Foreign cultural markers”, proposed by Professor Yang Xiaorong, refer to markers in a material or immaterial form that marks the culture-specificity of a given culture. Yang thinks that from the angle of interlingual translation, the objects and phenomena that bear cultural features can be divided into three groups:

- a. those common to both the source language culture and the target language culture;
- b. those peculiar to the source language culture;
- c. those peculiar to the target language culture. (杨晓荣, 2002: 18)

In a cross-cultural translation, since TC readers feel accustomed to the objects and phenomena that belong to Group a and Group c, they will take them for granted and pay little attention to them. Those objects and phenomena in SC, belonging to Group B, make the translation works exotic. The target readers will feel spontaneously that those objects and phenomena are different from their own. The bigger the differences, the more exotic the works are.

The foreign cultural features then are regarded as foreign cultural markers and divided into twelve categories by Yang. They are:

daily necessities; behaviors, customs, and ceremonies; festivals and entertainments; beliefs, religions, myths, legends and fables; values, concepts and notions; arts, literature and education; history, politics and economics; natural and geographical features; idiomatic languages; names of people and places; images in allusions and sayings; language styles. (杨晓荣, 2002)



Foreign cultural markers are the concrete embodiments of culture-specificity through certain media by means of comparison in intercultural communication. To be specific, in subtitle translation, the SC is embodied by the foreign cultural markers through the medium of language by means of comparison with the cultural markers of the TC. Foreign cultural markers and culture-specificity are mutually indispensable with regard to translation. In translation, without foreign cultural markers, culture-specificity would lose its carriers and a foreign cultural marker would lose its identity as a marker without the concept of culture-specificity.

4.1.2 Cultural level study

Before touching upon the study of cultural levels, we should first take a look at the structure of culture. According to its connotations, its different features and different roles, Lustig and Koester divide culture into the following four categories:

- a. **Substantial culture** refers to the substance, the production activities and the products, which human beings have in their long-term process of transforming the objective world.
- b. **System culture** refers to various social relations human beings have in their process of substance production. The law systems, political systems, economic systems and the principles for social and interpersonal relations belong to this category.
- c. **Behavior culture** is formed during culture creation with different ethnic or geographic modes of behaviors.
- d. **Psychoculture**. Certain production modes and ways of life can give rise to certain mentalities and mental qualities, which could be seen in such human mental activities as value orientation, aesthetic standards, modes of thinking, etc. (常宗林, 2004:23).

Based on the studies of cultural structure and cultural categories, we believe that culture can be subdivided and further analyzed, which is helpful both for the study of culture itself and for the study of culture translating. Culture, like any other organizations or processes, operates at all levels. Saville Troike's (1986: 47-48) definition of culture most closely encapsulates the theory of interrelated logical levels: "culture encompasses all of the shared rules for appropriate behavior that are learned by individuals as a



consequence of being members of the same group or community, as well as the values beliefs that underlie overt behaviors.”

Later, there appears a trend to regard culture as a an independent category of culture, a case in point is Nida's classifications of culture into ecology culture, material culture, social culture, religious culture and linguistic culture, which enlightens many other scholars and translators.

Professor Liu Miqing, a famous scholar of translation studies in China, made a deep research on cultural translation. In *An Outlined Theory of Cultranslation*, he emphasizes the distribution of cultural information in language, “to master the cultural information in the source text adequately is in the first place for an effective cultural translation. Therefore the basic knowledge which we should get to know in translation studies is the distribution of cultural information in language” (刘宓庆, 1999: 33).

According to his understanding, cultural information is distributed over the three cultural levels—surface, middle and deep levels:

- a. Surface level (material culture)
- b. Middle level (institutional culture and behavioral and customary culture)
- c. Deep level (mental culture)

Material culture lies on the surface level. This level includes implements of production, utensils of daily life and materialized culture that is related to human clothing, food, lodging and transportation. The middle level includes institutional culture and behavioral and customary culture. Conventions, systems, institutions and customs belong to this level. On the deep level there is the mental culture. And at last, language culture runs through the three cultural levels. “Each cultural level ---from surface level to deep level has close relationship with language, as language penetrates into every cultural level” (刘宓庆, 1999: 40).

Based on Liu's studies of cultural level, the twelve foreign culture markers in each language are put into three levels, which go as follows:

Surface level: daily necessities; natural and geographical features

Middle level: behaviors, customs and ceremonies; festivals and entertainment; idiomatic language; images in allusions and sayings; language styles; arts, literature and education; history, politics and economics; names of people and places.



Deep level: beliefs, religions, myths, legends and fables; values, concepts and notions.

4.1.3 Significance of study of cultural level to subtitle translation

The aim of putting different foreign cultural markers into appropriate cultural levels is meant to observe the distribution of cultural information in language, thus further helps to guide in choosing translation strategies of cultural transfer in subtitle translation.

The significance of the divisions of cultural levels can be observed from three angles: first, from the angle of the study of culture itself, the division of cultural levels is helpful for the understanding of culture, the nature, structure and function of culture. Furthermore, it is also helpful for studying the relationship between language and other cultural elements.

Secondly, from the angle of translation studies, the division of cultural levels is significant to the study of culture mediating in translation process. Language is a carrier of culture. The analysis of the way in which language stores cultural information is certainly important to the study of culture transferring in translation.

Thirdly, from the angle of subtitle translation, translation strategies of cultural information adopted on each cultural level are different, which can offer strong support to the principle of adequacy in practice, better in guiding the translator in the process of subtitle translation.

4.2 Strategies of translating culture in subtitle translation from the

Skopostheorie

Before starting to dealing with the issue of cultural information in subtitle translation, we will first try to make a point of choosing the terminology. Compared with *methods*, *ways* or *rules* to mediate and translate culture, the term *strategy* is preferred.

Strategy distinguishes itself from other related notions in that *strategy* is a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem the translator is confronted with---translating across cultures. More than a mere choice of word, *strategy* can reflect the implicit but general attitude a translator holds when dealing with the specific problem of translating culture.

Translation involves mental processing, and the term *strategy* could be used to



properly describe the whole process the translator in fact undergoes in culture mediating, thinking, decision making, etc.

Strategy is a more appropriate descriptor of the whole process because it at least implies:

- 1) procedure carried out by an individual translator;
- 2) goal;
- 3) planning;
- 4) a sequence of actions taken to reach the goal. (宋海云,2004:31)

4.2.1 Strategies of foreignization and domestication

In order to fulfill the *Skopos* of film subtitle translation, that is, to offer appropriate information about what is happening on the screen and to carry out smooth communication between the film and the target audiences, the translator will choose different translation strategies to deal with cultural barriers caused by cultural differences in intercultural communications.

There are two main strategies to deal with cultural information and they are known as foreignization and domestication. Domestication is here understood—after Lawrence Venuti—as“...translating in a transparent, fluent, ‘invisible’ style in order to minimize the foreignness of the target text” (Munday, 2001: 146). The result is that all foreign elements are assimilated into the dominant target culture, thus depriving the target audience of crucial characteristics of the source culture, which is also shown in the following quote:

The dominant trend towards domestication in translating from American English over the last three centuries has had a normalizing and neutralizing effect, depriving source text producers of their voice and re-expressing foreign cultural values in terms of what is familiar(and therefore unchallenging) to the dominant culture. (Hatim & Mason, 1997:145)

To put it differently, domestication is the approach that favors and privileges the target culture over the source culture, moving the author/creator towards the reader/audience.

Foreignization is an approach to translation which can be described as“...sending the reader abroad”, as Venuti aptly put it (Munday, 2001: 147). It is a method which



assumes that the translated text does not pretend to be an original and where the foreign identity of the source text is highlighted—which makes the ideological dominance of the target culture impossible. Foreignization privileges the source culture, and it evokes a sense of “otherness”, emphasizing the foreign nature of a film.

The debate on whether to foreignize or domesticate culture in translation has not ever stopped. Professor Sun Zhili (2002) stands for foreignization in conveying the foreign cultural features. Dr. Cai Ping (2002) thinks strategy of domestication plays a leading role in cultural translation. However, the proposal which is gaining recognition is that in order to achieve cross-cultural communication in E-C translation foreignization should be used.

At the beginning of this chapter, we have analyzed the relationship between culture and subtitle translation. As a special branch of translation, subtitle translation has its peculiarities. Subtitled films can provide an environment for foreign language learners. TC audiences are faced with a foreign culture while listening to the strange language and foreign music, and seeing unfamiliar behavior and things. What the characters say is the main clue for the audience to understand the plot. So it is very necessary for a translator to cautiously keep the original flavor of the source language and culture in the film. The culture-specificity of the SC in subtitle translation is directly concerned with keeping linguistic characteristics and introducing the foreign culture, what they believe, how they behave, e.g., to the Chinese audiences. Therefore, strategy of foreignization is necessary to meet the principle of adequacy.

At the same time, there are situations in which foreignization does not work owing to the great cultural gap. To make the audiences obtain the most relevant information within the shortest time, strategy of domestication is needed. Besides, the translator should be on guard against any invasion of cultural “rubbish” in foreign films. Strategy of domestication is also necessary to meet the requirement of conciseness.

In a word, subtitle translation is a process of foreignization and domestication complementing to each other. To deal with cultural information in subtitle translation, while domestication should be used as much as necessary, foreignization should be used as much as possible.



4.2.2 Study on techniques of translating culture in subtitle translation

The following will discuss how translators choose different translation techniques to translate culture in subtitle translation under the guidance of the two principles, according to Liu's study of cultural level.

Nedergaard-Larsen (1993: 219) puts forward six techniques to deal with culture-bound problems in film subtitle translation. They move "...from the totally target language-culture-oriented to the totally source language-culture-oriented" and can be seen as "...a continuum from the complete non-translation at one end to total adaption at the other one". They are as follows:

Transfer/loan (including exotism and imitation) → direct translation → explicitation → paraphrase → adaptation to TL-culture (including situational adaptation and cultural adaptation) → omission.

Based on the previous studies, the writer makes a tentative study of translation techniques of cultural information in film subtitle translation (E-C):

(Foreignization.....zero translation → direct translation → explanation → chunking.....Domestication)

They are in a sequence of preferred choice. Strategy of foreignization and domestication are two poles, and techniques of zero translation, direct translation, chunking and explanation fall in between.

The above list of translation techniques is an exploration of possibilities, open to discussions and debate, rather than an absolute categorization.

Zero translation mainly includes transliteration and transference. Transliteration is a total borrowing of linguistic sign of the source language culture, with the phonological form borrowed. So transliteration is mainly used to deal with proper names. Transference has the original expression just transferred into the target language culture, for example, DVD, DNA, WHO, WTO, KFC and other well-known abbreviations.

Direct translation can be used when cultural information in the source language culture can be directly translated into the target language culture, for instance, when images can evoke the same association and idioms have correspondent expressions in the target language culture.

Explanation can be used to convey the main idea of the original expressions when cultural information is too redundant to be necessarily mentioned within the constraints.



“Chunking”³ basically means to change the size of a unit. A unit can be made bigger (chunking up) which means that as more comes into view so we move from the specific to the general, or from the part to the whole. Or we chunk down from the general to the specific or from the whole to the parts. By chunking sideways, the translator is looking for alternatives which can more readily access the same context as in the source culture.

Example 8) ---- He joined the *Scholastic Decathlon Team*

----他参加了学术竞赛代表队（经典十项组）。

Example 9) ---There's hail the *size of golf balls* coming down here.

---在下着鸡蛋大小的冰雹。

Chunking up and chunking sideways can provide alternative translations. It may take some time for the audiences to settle down on the version of “经典十项组”, but “学术竞赛代表队” can do better in conveying the same information to the audiences. In the last example, by chunking sideways, the version of “鸡蛋大小的冰雹” rather than “高尔夫球大小的冰雹” may be out of consideration of avoiding obstruction in reading and understanding for Chinese audiences who are not familiar with “golf ball”.

4.2.2.1 Translating culture on the surface level

On the surface level, the translation of material things is picked out to illustrate.

As discussed before, films are polysemiotic. Information is transmitted through four channels. Some loss of information by subtitles may be compensated by the other three. Transliteration of material things may sound strange to TC audiences, but through the pictures, audiences can understand it immediately.

Example 10) -- Can I get you another *latté*?

-- 想再来一杯拿铁吗?

(from *Friends*)

With the help of visual image, plus with the fact that *latté* has been accepted and used in many Chinese cafés and hotels, the transliteration “拿铁” for the Italian coffee *latté* is preferred.

Example 11) Jack: My mom gave it to me. You know what this is? It's a *Claddagh ring*.

If it's pointed down...it means you're free. And if it's pointed up
towards your heart...it means you belong to someone.

杰克：妈妈给我的。克拉达戒指。如果心尖朝下，意味着我终身未定。

³ The term is taken from Katan (2004).



如果心尖朝上对着你的心，就证明情有所归了。

In this example of transliteration, Chinese audience may feel strange about the name, but with the help of pictures and explanation of the character, they can also get its meaning (Designed with two hands clasping a heart surmounted by a crown, *Claddagh* ring is a token of affection).

By transliteration, the vocabulary of the TC will be enriched, and it also contributes much to keep the original flavor of the foreign films.

4.2.2.2 Translating culture on the middle level

On the middle level, names of people and places, cultural images and idioms are chosen for illustration.

Translation of names of people and places

In most cases, transliteration of people's names is preferred.

In one of the most cited films, *Forrest Gump*, the title is translated into “阿甘正传”, which conforms more to the reading habits of Chinese audiences. While in the film, there appear two ways of translating “Forrest Gump”: “弗利斯特·甘” and “甘福利”. “甘福利” is an example of overdomestication, we do not see the point of the way of entirely domesticating Chinese culture, since the difference in naming and being named between two cultures are well known. Thus “弗利斯特·甘” can better achieve the purpose of translating adequately.

Another important phenomenon about names of people and places is cultural connotation involved in the original context. When there is too much cultural information stored, technique of explanation should be adopted for the sake of conciseness.

Example 12) -- She lived in a house that was as old as *Alabama*.

-- 她住在一间很旧的屋子。 (from *Forrest Gump*)

This is a line when Forrest talked about Jenny's poor living conditions. Alabama is a quite old state, which is well known among the SC audience. As far as TC audiences are concerned, cultural information can not be conveniently and adequately translated within the constraints, to explain and convey the implied meaning in the original context is desirable.

Example 13) Luther: It was a *Herculean* task, but you made it.

卢瑟：这是个非常艰巨的任务，但是你成功了。



(from *Mission Impossible*)

To understand this line properly demands knowledge of the western myth and legends. Herculean originates from ancient Greek myth. Being the son of Zeus, he is a hero of extraordinary strength. He is punished to finish twelve hard tasks because of his misleading. Here “a Herculean task” refers to a task that requires great efforts and wisdom. This cultural information is too redundant to be mentioned in subtitle, so its meaning underlying the name is explained.

To chunk the names of people and places up, down or sideways is also helpful in dealing with cultural information in subtitle translation.

Example 14) *Forrest Gump*: Since, number one, I wasn't hungry but thirsty; and number two, they were free, I must have drunk about fifteen *Dr Peppers*...
(from *Forrest Gump*)

阿甘：因为，首先我不饿只是口渴，

还有，什么东西都是免费的，我肯定喝了十五瓶汽水。

Since “Dr. Peppers” is a kind of American carbonated drinks, either “胡椒粉博士” or “胡椒粉医生” will leave the Chinese audiences puzzled. By chunking up, the translation of “汽水” is understandable and reasonable without mentioning the relevant information of this American brand.

Example 15) *Red*: There's must be a con like me in every prison in America. I'm the guy who can get it for you. Cigarettes, a bag of reefer if that's your thing, a bottle of brandy to celebrate your kid's high school graduation. Damn near anything within reason. Yes, sir, I'm a regular *Sears & Roebuck*.
(from *Shawshank Redemption*)

瑞德：美国的监狱少不了我这样的人。我可以给你弄到香烟，大麻，庆祝孩子高中毕业的白兰地。我就像邮递公司一样。

Sears & Roebuck refers to a company during the latter part of the 19th century. It is one of the most trusted economic institutions in U.S. history and further develops to be the 7th largest corporation in the world during the 20th century. Here if translated literally, the TC audiences will be confused. This phrase means that Red can be trusted in getting things from the outside just as *Sears & Roebuck* delivers. Therefore the translator chunks away *Sears & Roebuck* to “邮递公司”，concisely transferring the message.

Example 16) -- I was a national celebrity, famouser even than *Captain Kangaroo*.



-- 回国后我成了名人，比天皇巨星还出名 (from *Forrest Gump*)

In this example, *Captain Kangaroo* is chunked away to “天皇巨星”. Since “*Captain Kangaroo*” is a symbol of big celebrities in the eyes of children, the phrase has its history. “*Captain Kangaroo*” originally refers to a famous American children's show which runs on CBS from 1955 to 1985 and then moves to public television for six more years, winning six Emmys and three Peabody Awards. Through this show, one of the major performers, Bob Keeshan, became well-known among American kids as Captain Kangaroo. For Forrest Gump, a mentally retarded person, Captain Kangaroo can be considered as a yardstick to judge whether a person is famous or not. Forrest becomes well-known after he came back from China, so he said that he was even famouser than Captain Kangaroo. SC viewers may have little trouble comprehending the implied meaning. However, most Chinese audiences do not know this cultural background, considering the fact that this TV show was popular nearly two decades ago. A possible direct translation, “比儿童节目里那个有名的袋鼠上树还出名”, can not help the Chinese audience too much in understanding the content, while “天皇巨星” has the similar connotative meaning as “*Captain Kangaroo*” does in the source culture, and it can be adequate in the Gump's character portrayal.

Translation of cultural images

A cultural image is something that indirectly conjures up an idea or a mental picture of something else in one's mind in its language culture context. Each culture has its own depository of cultural images. The following is to deal with cultural images in subtitle translation.

Example 17) Bird: Miss Zora wouldn't hurt a fly.

-----琼拉小姐连苍蝇都不忍心伤害。 (from *Before Women Had Wings*)

“连一只蚂蚁都不忍心踩死” can be an otherwise successful translation. However, by employing the technique of direct translation, the original cultural image is preserved, which can also evoke the same picture in the minds of the Chinese audience.

On other occasions, due to the lack of a correspondent image in Chinese culture, the original cultural image in the English language has to be explained accordingly.

Example 18)-----From that day on, we were always together; Jenny and me were like *peas and carrots*. She taught me how to climb. (from *Forrest Gump*)

----从那天起，我们总是在一起。我和珍妮总是形影不离。他教我爬树。



In western cultures, peas and carrots are often used together as ingredients for meals. Knowing this, we understand that it is used here as a metaphor to mean Gump and Jenny are very intimate friends. While a direct translation, “象豌豆和胡萝卜一样”, fails to bring about the same meaning, because the two images, “豌豆” and “胡萝卜” can not cause the same association among the Chinese audience. Another version renders “like peas and carrots” to “秤不离砣” by employing the strategy of domestication, which transforms the original images into the equivalent images that are familiar to the Chinese audience, resulting in losing the originally foreign flavor. So the writer stands for “形影不离” by the technique of explanation.

Example 19) Lydia: Hello, Lizzy. Hell, Mr. Darcy. She is *as drunk as a horse*.

莉迪亚：你好，丽茜。你好，达西先生。瞧她醉醺醺的样子。

(from *Pride and Prejudice*)

Example 20) Lizzy: Yes, mama, I know, I know *as abrupt as bird's feathers*.

丽茜：是的，妈妈，我知道。我知道这事来得太突然了。

Since the original culture images evoked by “as drunk as a horse” and “as abrupt as bird's feather” can not be transmitted, the above two examples adopt the technique of explanation to give an easier access to the Chinese audience.

Because of cultural differences, some original images must be translated by domesticating to help the Chinese audiences have a better understanding of the film in overcoming the cultural differences.

Example 21) Roy: well, I ...but she ashe refused...

Kitty: Oh, take no notice----the *old dragon* makes her write that.

---呃，我...不过她....她拒绝了... (from *friends*)

——哦。 你別在意---是那个母老虎让她那么写的。

Example 22) Ellen: Food is what he needs most from the looks of him Mr.

Earnshaw. He's *as thin as a sparrow*. Come into the kitchen, child.

(from *Wuthering Heights*)

艾伦：恩萧先生，看她这样子，还是先吃点东西吧。他瘦得像根针。到厨房来吧，孩子。

Example 23) Scarlet: I' am scared to death, and if you had *the sense of a goat*

you'd scared, too! Oh, the Yankees! (from *Gone with the wind*)

斯佳丽：我吓得要死了，你就是呆得像头驴，也该觉得害怕。



噢，北佬！

In the above cases, the original cultural image of “dragon”, “sparrow” and “goat” are respectively chunked away to “tiger”, “a needle” and “a donkey” in the target culture, which are quite familiar to the Chinese audiences in the target cultural context.

Translation of idioms

Characterizing different cultures, idioms are often to be heard in the film dialogues. Moreover, idioms with classical allusions are rich in content and profound in meaning. To make the audiences obtain the most relevant information within the shortest time requires the translator seek for the equivalents of the idioms in the target culture with the aim of catering to the linguistic habit and aesthetic conventions of the Chinese audiences. In these cases, the technique of direct translation should be adopted.

Example 24) Fauna: What is it, Flora?

Flora: I'm going to...shh, shh, shh! *Even walls have ears.* Follow me. I'll
turn her into a flower. (from *Sleeping Beauty*)

芳娜：是什么办法，芙罗拉？

芙罗拉：我要将.....嘘，嘘，嘘！隔墙有耳，跟我来。
我要将它变成一朵花。

Example 25) Bunty: In all my life, I've never heard such a fantastic load of tripe? Oh
face the facts, folks. The chances of us getting out of here are *a million to one.*

Ginger: Then there's still a chance!

邦蒂：在我一生中，从来没有听说过这么美丽的胡话！哦，面对现实
吧，伙计们。我们出去的机会是百万分之一。

金杰：那还是有机会！

Example 26) Duke: “Your majesty, I see no point in *beating about the bush*. I regret to
inform you, Sire, that the young lady has disappeared, leaving behind
only this glass slipper.” (from *Cinderella*)

公爵：“陛下，我看没有必要旁敲侧击了，我很遗憾的告诉您，那位年
轻的女士已经不见了，只留下了一只水晶鞋。”

“*Beat about the bush*” is an English idiom, meaning saying something indirectly.

Example 27) Negil: Don't make me feed you to one of the models.

Andy: Sorry. It's a busy day. My personal life is *hanging by a thread*,



that's all.

(from *The Devil Wears Prada*)

内格尔: 别跟那些模特一个德性。

安迪: 对不起。我太忙了。我的个人生活岌岌可危。

Hang by a thread is an allusion derived from an English legend about Damocles. Damocles is an officer of King Dionsysius. Dionsysius got tired of Damocles' flattering and asked him to a party. At the party, the king asked Damocles to sit under an arrow hung by a piece of hair to warn him that his situation is dangerous. Here this allusion is used to mean depending on a small thing or be at risk.

While there are no equivalent expressions of idioms in the TC, the technique of explanation come in handy.

Example 28) Walter: who is married to Harold, who ran off with his secretary?

Annie: He came back, because Irene threatened to *put the dog to sleep* if he didn't.

(from *Sleepless in Seattle*)

华德: 她嫁给了那个带着秘书私奔的哈罗德。

安妮: 但是他又回来了, 因为艾琳威胁说不回来她就把那个女人干掉。

In this case, dog is a *slang* word which means ugly women. So "*put the dog to sleep*" is an euphemistic way of saying to kill someone. The translator chooses to convey the meaning, by using explanation and renders it to "把那个女人干掉".

Ross: So, I'm guessing you had an extra ticket and couldn't decide which one of you got to bring a date?

Example 29) Kennedy: we get over 4,000 calls a year. That's a lot of action. Got to be willing to go *the extra mile*. Are you willing to go the extra mile, Jack?

Jack: Yes, sir.

(from *Ladder 49*)

肯尼迪: 每年都要接 4000 多起火警, 频繁出动。总是超负荷工作。怎么样, 杰克? 你愿意这样工作吗?

杰克: 我愿意, 长官。

Go the extra mile originates from the Bible. It is an explanation of a commandment of Jesus' in the Sermon on the Mount, "whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain".

Example 30) Ross: So, I'm guessing you had an extra ticket and couldn't decide which



one of you got to bring a date?

Chandler: Well, aren't we Mr. "The glass is half empty". (from *Friends*)

---一定是你多了一张门票，找不到人一起去看。

---我们不是“悲观之人”。

"The glass is half full" is an English idiom. It refers to optimism by looking at the bright side; other way round, "the glass is half empty" is for pessimism. The overt translation by explaining, "悲观之人", is quite concise and adequate in information conveying.

4.2.2.3 Translating culture on the deep level

"What predominate element is found in every culture and has for thousands of years given people their world view" (Samovar, 2004:87)? Of course, the answer is religion.

On the deep level, translation of religious beliefs is a case in point.

The long-standing history of religion is directly linked to culture. As an important manifestation of its culture, there may be a large number of expressions concerning religion in its language. Christianity, in which over a billion people around the world believe, plays a key role in English language and its culture.

Christianity reflects what people in English-speaking countries believe and how they view their lives. The religious ideas can be found in many text types, films surely included. We can see the scenes of kissing the cross, saying a prayer, saying a grace before meals, being baptized, to name just a few. However, the counterpart of Christianity in China is Buddhism, and the Chinese audiences may have a difficult time in accepting foreign religious ideas and behaviors. When it comes to subtitle translation, to spread the religious ideas and keep the original flavor as much as possible in the terms of religion is desired. Thus the strategy of foreignization should be adopted in most cases in order to help the Chinese audiences have a real taste of the foreign religious culture.

Example 31) Ruth: And where exactly do you live, Mr. Dawson?

Jack: Well, right now my address is the RMS Titanic. After that, I'm
on God's good humor. (from *Titanic*)

露西：你究竟住在什么地方，唐逊先生？

杰克：目前我的地址是铁达尼号，这以后，我要看上帝的安排了。

Example 32) Anthony: You had a conversation with God, huh? What did God say?

"Go forth, my son, and leave big slobbery suction rings



on every dashboard you find"? Why the hell do you do that? (from *Crash*)

-----你何时与上帝交谈了？他说了什么？

“去吧，孩子。在你偷来的每辆汽车上祈祷？”

你为何要这样做呢？

Since the expression “God!”, “God bless!” and “Thank Goodness” has entered the Chinese language, “上帝” can be regarded as an adequate translation, acceptable for the Chinese audience. Thus the strategy of foreignization is the first choice. So it is with exclamatory remarks such as “Jesus!” and “Christ!”.

Example 33) Dorri: What are you talking about, Daddy?

Farhad: My angel. My angel.

She came to protect me.

To protect us!

(from *Crash*)

---你在说什么，爸爸？

---她是我的天使，我的天使！

她是来保护我的。

来保护我们的！

“Angel” is another typical character in Christianity, which appears in music, film, daily conversations and so on. Farhad misfired at his daughter, but the gun turns out to have been already loaded with blanks. The fact that his daughter is not hurt gives Farhad a great relief. Believing that it is due to an angel's help, Farhad gets excited. Like the treatment of “God” in the above, the strategy of foreignization is adopted.

Example 34) -----In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

----- 以圣父，圣子，圣灵的名义，阿门 (from *The Sound of Music*)

Example 35) Ashley: Will you look after Melanie for me? She's so frail and gentle and she loves you so much. You see, if I were killed and she had.....

Scarlett: Oh, you mustn't say that! It's bad luck. Say a prayer, quickly.

Ashley: You say one for me. We shall need all our prayers now

and the end is coming. (from *Gone with the Wind*)

你愿意为我照顾梅兰妮吗？她是那么脆弱，温和，而且她非常爱你。万一我死了，她.....

噢，你不该那样说！那是恶兆。快祈祷一下。

你为我祈祷吧。我们需要所有的祈祷了，结局快到了。



"Amen", "say a prayer" is quite common in the SC. Although the Chinese audiences are more familiar with "阿弥陀佛" or "老天保佑", in order to provide a chance to learn more about the foreign culture, the foreignness of the practice should be retained in subtitle.

Example 36) Mr. Brocklehurst: Pupils! Observe this child. She is yet young. She possesses the ordinary form of girlhood. No single deformity points her out as a marked character. Who would believe that the *Evil One* had already found in her a servant and an agent?.....
For it is my duty to warn you, and my tongue fathers as I tell it, that this girl, this child, the native of a *Christian Land*, no better than many little heathen that says its prayers to *Brahma* and kneels before *Juggernaut*.
(from *Jane*)

勃洛克赫斯特先生：孩子们！你们看见这个小姑娘了吧。她虽然还小，有跟平常的小女孩一样的外貌，没有明显的残疾说明她是个特殊人物。谁会相信恶魔已经占据了她的身体，驱使她为奴仆，为代表？...我的职责是警告你们，我所说的话都是经过慎重考虑的。这个女孩，一个基督徒土地上的子民，不比任何一个向异教神坛祈祷、跪拜的异教徒好到哪去。

In this example, "*Christian Land*" can be translated directly into "基督徒土地". The expressions "*the Evil One*", "*Brahma*" and "*Juggernaut*" are also related to religion. "*the Evil One*" means the evil spirit or the Demon in Christianity, while "*Brahma*" and "*Juggernaut*" are believed as Indian gods. With Christianity worshiped as the only orthodox belief at that time in Britain, religion other than Christianity is regarded as heresies. Direct translation of these religious terms will only get the Chinese audience confused. By adopting the strategy of chunking, the translator chunks them up to be "异教神坛" and "异教徒", both principle of conciseness and adequacy in cultural transfer in subtitle are achieved.

However, there are situations in which religious belief in SC can not be transmitted within the shortest time; strategy of domestication will be a necessary supplement.

Example 37) Flanagan: You know what? Maybe you're right.

Maybe Lewis did provoke this.
And maybe he got exactly



What was coming to him.

(from *Crash*)

——也许你是对的。

也许的确是里维斯挑起的。

也许他是恶有恶报。

Example 38) Graham: You really think you're gonna

be able to make that fly?

(from *Crash*)

——你以为这样就能瞒天过海吗？

Example 39) ---There is a legend that fallen knights *returned* great horses. He has seen

what awaits you, and he will protect you. (from *King Arthur*)

---传说中，战死的骑士死后会轮回为伟大的战马，它知道会发生什么，
它会保护你的。

Example 40) Seth: Why did you do this?

Because her *number was up*?

(from *City of Angels*)

塞斯：为什么会这样？

难道她气数已尽？

“恶有恶报”，“瞒天过海”，“轮回” and “气数已尽” are typical Buddhist ideas. By domesticating Chinese culture, the subtitles can both concisely transfer the message and help the audience easily understand the film.

Within the constraints of time and space, to keep the original flavor, transfer the source culture and offer well-translated subtitles to help the TC audiences demands the translator maximize the strategy of foreignization while domestication is also necessary. The end justifies the means; in order to deal with specific cultural information in subtitle translation, proper techniques have to be chosen.



5. Conclusion

An increasing number of subtitled films flock into China; translated appropriately, they can be influential and powerful vehicles for transferring values, ideas and information of foreign culture.

This thesis makes a study on translating culture in E-C film subtitle translation, in which the Skopostheorie has been applied to its analysis.

According to the *Skopostheorie*, subtitle translation is a purposeful activity. Acting as a decisive factor influencing the translator's choice of translation strategies, the skopos of subtitle translation is to provide well-translated subtitles, offering adequate information to help the TC audience understand what is happening in the film within the constraints of time and space. As for how to translate purposefully or fulfill subtitle translation as intercultural communications between the film and the target audience, working principles are put forth.

Aiming at raising the awareness of cultural information in subtitle translation on the part of translators, the focus of this study is strategies chosen in translating culture in the process. Believing that culture can be subdivided and analyzed, the author applies Professor Liu Miqing's viewpoint of cultural levels to the study of cultural information in subtitle translation, which can bring enlightenment both to the studies and to the practice of subtitle translation. Combining with strategies of foreignization and domestication in subtitle translation, the author puts forward a set of techniques dealing with specific cultural information; via descriptive and explanatory analysis of choosing strategy and technique to translate culture on each level, the author comes to the conclusion that foreignization and domestication are complementary to each other; the Skopostheorie can act as a guidance in strategies and techniques choosing to translate culture in subtitle translation.

The study in this thesis is limited in the aspects of depth and width because of the author's limited knowledge about film subtitles and the lack of practical experience. However, translation of cultural information in film subtitling is worth more researches.



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相似文献(10条)

1. 学位论文 高乾 交际翻译法在英语电影字幕翻译中的运用——语言、文化问题的处理 2007

本文尝试将纽马克的交际翻译法理论运用于英文电影字幕翻译,旨在凸现电影字幕翻译研究的重要性,鼓励更多的研究者从事这一领域研究,从而有望改变电影字幕翻译研究长期被人忽视的尴尬局面。

电影作为一种大众媒体形式,广受大众欢迎。它在国际文化交流以及文化传播中的作用已经人所共识,而且其作用日益重要。原因在于,每一部电影都浸润文化。换言之,每部电影都被打上了相关文化的烙印。一方面,电影作品本身就是电影工作者的艺术作品,不可避免地体现电影工作者的个人价值观、信仰以及个人认同的社会意识形态。正是这些价值观、信仰以及社会意识形态才是电影主题创作、风格和剧情的源泉。欣赏电影的同时,关注这些方面,会使我们对于每部电影制作时所处的文化氛围以及电影中反映的文化有较深的认识。另一方面,每部电影都会为我们栩栩如生地呈现异国他乡的生活一隅。电影为我们打开一扇通往外界的窗口,让我们可以直观浏览异国地貌和风景、异乡的风俗习惯,等等。因此,观看外国电影无疑是了解外国文化,促进国际交流的一个更为有效的途径。而且,近年来,随着国内文化市场的开放和互联网的普及,越来越多的外国电影涌入国门,为国人欣赏外国电影、了解外国文化提供更多机会。

然而,众多外国电影中,由于英语的使用范围最广,因此英语电影在数量上占头筹。但是,国人不懂英语的普通大众居多,无法直接欣赏原片,那么若要观看英语电影,就必须依赖翻译:译制和字幕翻译。正是出于这样的原因,英语电影字幕翻译工作才开始引起国人关注,不少翻译工作者也投身到了字幕翻译研究中来。但是,长期对字幕翻译工作的不重视,造成理论研究的匮乏。

首先,近年来,有关字幕翻译研究的论文和论著数量有限,而且目前的研究仅囿于一、两种有限的理论范围,比如严复的“信,达,雅”和奈达的“功能对等”理论。其次,这些研究在理论运用的同时都未结合电影字幕特点对这理论的适合之处详加探讨。

正是鉴于当前研究存在的问题,本文尝试通过交际翻译法理论入手对英语电影字幕翻译作一全面考察。主要从电影的特点、字幕的特点、字幕翻译的性质以及字幕翻译的制约因素四方面研究字幕翻译,然后由电影字幕翻译特点进而论述到合适的翻译理论:交际翻译法理论,同时与功能对等理论作一对比。最后,用四十一个实例来说明交际翻译法的适用之处。

简言之,本论文最终的目的就在于通过用交际翻译法理论研究电影字幕翻译,为字幕翻译研究提供一个新的研究角度,从而鼓励更多翻译工作者以及有志于电影字幕翻译的爱好者加入到这一领域中来。

2. 期刊论文 袁晓静 英语电影字幕翻译中的归化和异化 -[文教资料](#)2009,“(29)

影视字幕是原声口语浓缩的书面文本,虽不同于文学文本,但其中承载着许多文化信息,而在进行字幕翻译时,如何处理其中的文化信息则会直接影响到观众对影片和外国文化的理解。文章通过实例,评析了归化和异化在英语电影字幕翻译中的运用,并指出了在影视字幕翻译中,归化和异化应共同存在并互为补充,在处理不同因素时各有侧重。

3. 学位论文 尚丽君 英语电影字幕翻译中的文化因素及翻译策略 2008

随着社会经济及科技的迅速发展,我国与世界各国跨文化交流日趋频繁。人们对外国的语言及文化也表现出浓厚兴趣。但是由于各国语言文化的差异性,翻译在整个交流过程中变得尤为重要。自从中国加入世贸组织,许多外国优秀影片涌入中国电影市场,中国电影市场出现繁荣景象。然而电影市场的繁荣却与翻译界对电影翻译的重视程度不符合。鉴于电影翻译的现状,作者试图运用奈达的功能对等理论对电影字幕翻译进行研究。奈达的功能对等理论强调目标语读者的对翻译的反应并要求目标语读者与源语读者反应一致。

随着翻译的文化转向,翻译理论家和学者把翻译看做不仅是语言之间的转换,而且更是一种文化交流方式。他们把研究重点转到了翻译中的文化因素。本文的研究重点是英语电影字幕翻译过程中的文化因素并提出相应的翻译策略。

论文首先简要介绍了国内外电影字幕翻译的现状。翻译学者及理论家传统上根据文化优越性来选择他们翻译的目标。他们认为翻译文学作品要比翻译电影更有声望。但是随着经济文化的发展,这种情况有所改变。作者列举了在电影翻译界做出过突出贡献的理论家及他们各自的成就。通过了解前人的成就,分析出其中的不足,为以后的发展提供了道路。

其次作者探讨了电影字幕翻译的概念及特点。许多翻译理论家对电影字幕翻译有不同的定义及不同的看法。电影字幕翻译不同于其他文学翻译,有其自身独特的特点。电影本身就是声画结合的艺术,因此电影字幕翻译受空间及时间等因素的制约。只有了解了这些制约因素才能提出正确的翻译策略。本文运用奈达的对等理论来探讨电影字幕翻译,所以有必要对奈达的理论及应用此理论的必要性及可能性做出介绍。第三部分讨论了文化与翻译。随着翻译的文化转向,更多学者将注意力放在了翻译中的文化因素上,因为翻译不只是语言的翻译更是文化的翻译。本文所指的文化因素,主要是指英语成套词,如动物词,颜色词,人名和地点词等;英语成语及文学作品及日常生活中文化意象的翻译。

通过吸收前人经验及成就,作者总结出三条翻译原则:准确,简洁并要达到功能对等。在电影字幕翻译过程中会出现一些问题。问题主要从三个方面体现:翻译者本身,电影字幕与画面统一及对话中文化词语的翻译问题。为解决这类问题,作者提出了相应的翻译策略。

4. 期刊论文 杨春宇 英文电影字幕翻译中的情感同步处理 -[大众商务\(下半月\)](#)2009,“(11)

本文讨论了在英文影片的字幕翻译中,在力图简明易懂的基础上,通过对原文字幕进行加工润色,保持原片中所传达的情感讯息,使观众更好理解原片的情感文化,进而同步产生情感共鸣。

5. 学位论文 王立野 电影字幕翻译的功能主义分析——《达·芬奇密码》个案研究 2009

随着社会的快速发展,电影成为人们日常生活中不可或缺的一部分。除了欣赏中国国产电影外,外国电影也越来越受到人们的青睐。目前来看,国内对电影字幕翻译的研究只是处于刚刚起步的阶段,相对国外来讲,相对滞后。本文尝试着用“功能翻译理论”的分析方法和策略来研究影响字幕翻译的一些因素。

根据赫尔兹·曼塔里的“翻译行为理论”,电影字幕翻译是人与人之间的互动、交流以及传承。导演的意图会很大程度上影响到影视作品的脉络以及情节的发展,只有抓住了导演的想法,译者才有可能大致了解在翻译的时候要使用哪种翻译方法和策略。

电影字幕的翻译是一个目的性很强的行为活动。电影字幕翻译的目的,就是能有效的将导演意图传达给观众,而每部电影的具体目的又根据电影不同,决定了电影字幕翻译的最终方法和策略。

根据德国著名的“功能翻译学派”领袖人物卡塔琳娜·赖斯的文本理论,按照主要交际功能,将文本分为“信息性文本”、“表达性文本”和“诱导性文本”三大类。

此外,卡塔琳娜·赖斯还定义了第四种文本,即“视听文本”,并提出:大部分文本应该是同时具备几种文本的“复合型文本”。本文的切入点是从事功能主义翻译的角度,剖析电影字幕翻译的方法和策略;本文焦点是分析、了解决定译者翻译方法和策略的一些因素。

6. 期刊论文 谢锦芳 英语电影的字幕翻译探讨 -[考试周刊](#)2009,“(24)

字幕翻译既具有其他翻译领域的共性,同时又有其独特性。字幕翻译在很大程度上受时间和空间的制约。此外,字幕翻译还受观众的接受程度和文化因素的制约。作为文化交流的中介,电影字幕的译者必须充分注意语言的艺术性,并且采取的策略必须以观众为中心,以促进不同文化的交流,减少文化差距。

7. 学位论文 熊雁娜 英语电影翻译的归化与异化 2005

本文试图探究将归化、异化的翻译策略与英语电影汉译结合起来的可行性。文章首先对电影语言和电影翻译的本质与特点进行了深入细致的分析。

本文在英语电影汉译过程中,一方面,译者必须通过再现英语电影的语言,文化特色,力图保留英语电影的“原汁原味”。另一方面,为了确保目标电影一定程度的“可读性”和“亲切感”,译者必须在译文中提供相应的汉语文化中的对等表达。在这一部分,围绕着归化和异化,对于英语电影中出现的具

有宗教含义的表达，独具地域特色的语言，一些固定表达以及谚语如何进行汉译分别进行了具体的分析阐释。

8. 学位论文 张薇薇 字幕翻译：如何取舍——从关联理论角度看影视字幕减译 2007

当今影视事业发展欣欣向荣，影视字幕翻译也随之受到关注。从翻译方法到课程培训，西方在此类领域方面的研究已逐渐形成体系。并设有专门的研究机构以及在大学设立针对培养专门影视翻译人才的课程。相比之下，国内虽然也有不少学者发表论文涉足该领域，但大都是关于字幕翻译的方法和理论总结，理论研究尚显不足。

本文将根据关联理论的要求和标准，对字幕翻译中一项最显著的特点也是最常用的翻译方法——减译进行了初步的研究，字幕翻译必须简洁易懂。其中包括在字幕翻译中实现减译的理论依据和可行性，从理论的高度来分析研究字幕翻译这一翻译实践，总结出规律性的东西，用以指导将来的此类实践。

论文第一章介绍影视字幕翻译的发展状况，比如东西方研究发展的不平衡，以及国内影视产业欣欣向荣与影视翻译研究严重不足的不平衡。第二章简述中西影视字幕翻译的研究史，比如字幕的特点，分类，规则，翻译理论等。第三章详细介绍字幕翻译的特点以及电影语言本身的特点。首先大概介绍一下字幕翻译技巧，然后着重突出作为影视字幕翻译因其受时间和空间限制，最常用最显著的技巧——减译(reduction)。并指出经济性是字幕翻译的最明显特点。减译分为四种：缩译(condensation)，略译(decimation)简化(paragraph reduction)，删译(deletion)。第四章试图用关联理论和电影语言本身的特点对字幕翻译的这些方法进行分析研究。关联理论告诉我们个人对语篇的认知离不开语境。而在字幕翻译中，关联理论主要体现在字幕翻译者如何判断观众的认知能力上。在有限的时间和空间内，任何超越观众认知能力的无关或次要信息都应该被简化或删除，让位于最核心和最重要的信息。同时，影像中图片和音乐的衬托也可以很好的对信息作出阐释和补充说明。然后，本文结合关联理论并借助具体事例分析如何运用这些重要技巧。只有熟练掌握了这些技巧，译员才能更好的完成字幕翻译这一颇具难度的翻译实践。第五章理论结合实际，结合实例介绍如何运用关联理论以及电影语言本身的特点到具体的字幕翻译中去。最后一章综合以上理论以及技巧的运用试探性得出结论——即对于不同体裁风格的电影电视，其翻译技巧多样但仍是有章可循：什么情况下要用到减译以及如何使用、使用减译中具体哪一种类型，等等。本文将总结这些规律，以求对后来这类问题的研究起到抛砖引玉的作用。为了更有针对性和系统性，本文讨论的问题仅限于英语电影的字幕翻译。但是本文所提出的字幕翻译的技巧与方法，原则上也适用于其他语言间的影视字幕的互译，并对一般性的翻译理论与实践活动做出微薄的贡献。

9. 学位论文 郭星余 字幕翻译的改写——从意识形态和技术角度的分析 2007

本文运用描述研究方法并结合事例分析试图从文本外的两个重要因素——意识形态和技术限制两个方面来探讨字幕翻译的改写现象。翻译是为了实现某种目的而在特定条件制约下进行的行为，因此它就有可能成为一种对原文的改写。

将翻译视为一种改写方式的观点由Lefevere(1992)提出，他认为文学系统具备双重制约因素，一个是内部因素，即“专业人士”；另一个是外部因素，即“赞助人”。¹这样，Lefevere通过把翻译作为译入文化的译作加以研究，考察文本与文本外的意识形态、文化等因素之间的关系。翻译作为一种跨语言、跨文化的交际活动与社会实践，无疑要受到意识形态的影响和制约，电影字幕翻译当然也不能例外。本文将操控字幕翻译的意识形态分为官方意识形态和大众意识形态。审查制度的影响来自文学系统外，属于“赞助人”因素，反映了一定时期官方意识形态某些方面的内容。除此之外，大众意识形态对字幕翻译的操控作用也不能忽视，尤其是呈现出娱乐化趋势的今天。改写是为了迎合不同的观众阅读作品的方式而对一件文学作品进行的改编。对电影字幕的改写同样也需要迎合观众的口味。而大众文化代表了大众的艺术趣味，也是大众欲望的表现形式，其实质是大众的意识形态，对电影内容的表现形式发挥着极大的影响，其中也包括对电影字幕的影响。

字幕翻译是一种很特殊的翻译，由于电影对白的文学性，所以属于文学翻译，又因为电影本身属于多媒体范畴，所以字幕翻译又属于多媒体翻译。因此从全面考察的目的出发，电影字幕翻译还需从其本身所特有的技术特点进行分析。分析主要从字幕本身所固有的技术限制入手，结合在其影响下所运用的翻译策略，寻找在字幕技术限制下对翻译结果的影响。

总之，本文作者认为改写理论对电影字幕翻译具有指导分析作用。意识形态和技术限制因素操控了电影字幕翻译，它们在翻译实践中共同发挥着作用，促使英语电影改写现象的存在。

10. 期刊论文 熊雁娜. XIONG Yan-na 英语电影《泰坦尼克号》汉译评析 -太原科技大学学报2005, 26(3)

电影,作为一门独特的艺术形式,其翻译也具有其他领域翻译所不具备的特点,对英语电影<泰坦尼克号>的两种译本,即电影中文字幕翻译和中文配音翻译,进行比较分析.仅就一个场景的对白,比较两种译本在措辞、译句结构、人物个性化语言的凸显、翻译方法和技巧的运用方面的异同以及不同的翻译美学再现方式,使两种译本各自的优缺点和不同的翻译美学效应得以局部呈现.

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