摘　要

随着Sperber与Wilson(1986)关联理论的提出以及Gutt(1991)的关联翻译理论的问世，许多学者开始从关联理论的角度对翻译进行研究。本文通过对美国情景喜剧《老友记》中的幽默话语翻译这一个案的研究，试图证明关联理论对翻译理论和实践的阐释力，并为幽默对话翻译的研究提供新的视角。

为更好地了解幽默文本的内部结构，本文将采用阿塔多的文字幽默总论分析原文幽默以及对比其译文。文字幽默总论指出幽默文本包含六种知识来源，分别是脚本不一致、逻辑机制、场景、对象、叙述策略、语言，其中脚本不一致最重要，任何幽默都包含这一因素。

关联翻译理论，通过强调译语和原语的解释性相似，对于过去常常被认为不可译的幽默语具有较强的解释力。本文试图从关联理论角度研究英语中幽默语的汉译过程，并探讨幽默翻译中相互关联的翻译原则和方法。作者认为，从关联理论角度研究幽默语的翻译对翻译实践有着理论指导意义。在关联语境下，对关联的认知会指导人们译出越来越多的好的幽默语译本，真正让不同语言文化背景下的译文读者分享原作所表达的幽默，分享原作作者所表达的思想感情。

关键词: 幽默话语翻译；关联理论；最佳关联

Abstract

With the emergence of Relevance theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) and the relevance-theoretic translation theory proposed by Gutt (1991), many scholars began to do researches on translation from the perspective of Relevance Theory. This thesis, which studies the specific case of the translation of humor in the American sitcom *Friends*, intends to prove that relevance theory is powerful in accounting for the theory and practice of translation, and to provide a new angle for the study of humorous dialog translation.

To better understand the internal structure of humorous texts, the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) put forward by Attardo is employed. It is acknowledged as one of the most convincing humor theories from the linguistic point of view. It consists of six Knowledge Resources (KR) which have been arranged hierarchically, i.e. Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS), and Language (LA). It is claimed that SO is the most abstract one and that each joke should have a SO.

Relevance Theory is employed as a theory with a stronger interpretive force than traditional modes on humor translation. This thesis, aiming to investigate the process of English-Chinese translation of humor from the RT perspective, endeavors to apply its principles and methods to the re-construction of humor in the target language. It is hoped that this research on humor translation from the perspective of Relevance Theory

will prove to be beneficial for the translation of humor and that in the future there will be more desirable humor versions so that people with different attitudes and senses of humor can share the humor expressed in the original works and the thoughts and feelings of their authors.

Key words: verbal humor translation; Relevance Theory; optimal relevance

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Introduction

Since China adopted the opening-up policy, more and more foreign movies and TV programs have been introduced into China, including not only the yearly officially imported Hollywood block-buster movies but also TV sitcoms. It is worth noticing that the introduction and importation of foreign sitcoms in China is increasing by leaps and bounds. Some of them turn out to be very influential and popular among the young people.

Friends, one of the most popular sitcoms in the U.S., has finished its 10th season. It has millions of fans over 60 countries. In addition to the excellent performance of its actors and actresses, the basic reason for its popularity consists in its humorous language. But the great differences in culture between China and America and the characteristics of subtitling make the translation task far from easy. Especially with much canned laughter, humor would be lost if the translator fails to make Chinese viewers laugh at the same time.

Humor translation has attracted more attention than before, although still far from enough. In the past, studies of humor translation focused mainly on the language barrier that sometimes renders humor untranslatable. In recent years, culture, an important factor influencing translation, has gained more attention in the academic circle.

In this thesis, the author challenges herself with a rather systematical study on the translation of verbal humor under the guidance of relevance-theoretic translation theory. Both lingual and cultural factors are taken into consideration in the discussion. The study will start with

a brief introduction to sitcom and *Friends*.

0.1 Sitcom and *Friends*

Sitcom (abbreviation of "situation comedy") is "a comedy (serial) in which the humor derives largely from the particular conjunction of characters and circumstances." (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, Volume 15:570). It was originated in the U.S. in the 1940s, initially devised for radio but today typically found on television. It usually consists of recurring characters in a format in which there are one or more humorous story lines centered on a common environment, such as a family home or workplace.

It is believed that the emergence of TV sitcom is closely related to the invention of television and the pressure problem at the post-industrial era in America. American companies at that time were under constant pressure to make products and profits. People were busily occupied in numerous activities, and committed with too many demands from their companies. Everybody suffers from great pressure every day. TV Sitcoms appeared at that time because of its special capacity to make people laugh and get relaxation within a short period of time. The dialogues are always witty and humorous, covering all kinds of people's idiomatic expressions. Now, the fact that American sitcoms become more and more popular is also related to the pressure problems. A survey shows that seventy-two percent of U.S. workers experience frequent stress-related physical or mental conditions every day. There has to be a release valve for all that pressure disease; watching sitcom is really a good and quick medicine.

Nowadays, sitcom is not only a popular art that is central to American entertainment and an important part of the nation's cultural life, but also a worldwide screen entertainment mode. American sitcoms are loved not only by the ordinary people for its light-hearted humorous style but also by the big TV stations for its magical power of increasing audience rating and gaining advertising.

The basic unit of sitcom is episode that usually lasts for about 20 minutes. Each episode consists of several acts that happen in certain places like dining room or living room , where characters gather sharing their stories and discussing certain topics. What distinguishes it from other TV series that have a through storyline is that it has a relatively independent topic in each episode from others. The general principle of sitcom, just as the word comedy indicates, is to elicit laughter from its audience. Apart from such amusing factors as the exaggerated facial expressions of actors and actresses or special musical effect, its humor derives mainly from the smart and funny dialogues in a particular situation. And in order to increase the comic effect, the broadcasting of each story is also accompanied by real or recorded sound of laughter/canned laughter as background sound.

Friends is a comedy series set in Manhattan about six young friends: Monica Geller, a chef who lives in an apartment in Greenwich Village with her friend from high school, Rachel Green, a pampered girl starting her life over independently; Chandler Bing, a computer programmer with a dry wit; Joey Tribbiani, a funny but not-so-intelligent actor; Phoebe Buffay, a new-age masseuse and Monica's former roommate, and Ross, Monica's brother, a nerdy paleontologist whose wife left him

for another woman. The group of six friends frequently hang out at a cafe named Central Perk or at one of their apartments, and get entangled in humorous everyday scenarios solutions.

It was created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman, and produced by Kevin S. Bright, Marta Kauffman and David Crane. It was originally broadcast from 1994 to 2004. One of the most popular television series of all time, the show has been broadcast in over one hundred countries and still continues to attract good ratings for its repeat episodes. The final episode of the show remains one of the largest in terms of television audience numbers in the U.S.. *Friends* was aimed at young adults who, during the early 1990s, were identified by their café culture, dating scene and modern independence.

Friends featured many of its celebrity guest stars as secondary characters in the show. Most U.S. sitcoms use celebrities in cameo appearances to raise ratings during important sweeps weeks, but some celebrities appeared on *Friends* throughout each TV season. These stars included Brad Pitt, Bruce Willis, George Clooney, Sean Penn, Danny DeVito, Robin Williams, Helen Hunt, Brooke Shields, Julia Roberts, Sarah Ferguson, Freddie Prinze, Jr., Ben Stiller, Alec Baldwin, Ralph Lauren, Hank Azaria, Anna Faris, Winona Ryder, and Isabella Rossellini. Child star Dakota Fanning played the role of Mackenzie in Season 10 of the series in the episode "The One with Princess Consuela". The final episode of the show was watched by an estimated US audience of 51.5 million.

Since its debut season (1994-95), *Friends* has received 55 Emmy Award nominations, including six for Outstanding Comedy Series. The

cast won a Screen Actors Guild Award in 1996 for Outstanding Ensemble Performance in a Comedy Series and has been nominated five times (1996, 1997, 1998, 2002 and 2004) for a Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series, Musical or Comedy. *Friends* won the People's Choice Award for Favorite New Comedy Series in its first season, and has since won three more times as Favorite Comedy Series including 2003.

In 2004, China Central Television, the Chinese national television network, planned to import the U.S. sitcom, *Friends*, but decided against doing that because of the sitcom's high sexual reference content. That was also the year the curtain fell on *Friends* at NBC (National Broadcasting Corporation) which produced the series. The series has had a long and successful run since 1994, finding popular following in the U.S. and other English speaking worlds. Elsewhere it was translated or subtitled. In these and other ways, this staple of the NBC Thursday night line-up thus found a global audience.

On the other side of the Pacific, television viewers in the People's Republic of China (PRC) first encountered *Friends*, now reportedly one of the most popular American sitcoms to hit mainland China in recent years, as early as the mid-1990s when Pearl TV, a Hong Kong commercial broadcaster, picked up the series and broadcast it with Chinese subtitles. Outside Hong Kong, viewers of *Friends* were initially confined to Macau SAR, Guangdong Province and other parts of south China. The reach of the sitcom expanded with the various official releases of *Friends* on DVD formats in the new millennium. In 2006 Hong Kong-based STAR (Satellite TV of the Asian Region) of News Corporation provided a further means of access within and beyond south

China. That same year, this station created the *Friends*-inspired "reality TV" program that required chosen participants to live together in an apartment as friends. To qualify, the participants had to demonstrate knowledge of and familiarity for *Friends*, as well as the ability to imitate *Friends* characters. By now, fan clubs of *Friends* had emerged in Chinese cities, while *Friends* forums mushroomed profusely in the Chinese cyberspace. Illegal circulation, via video piracy or internet download, remained the commonest mode of dissemination for sitcom however. Chinese youth, especially college students and white-collar workers, were apparently the most avid fans of *Friends*; they tended to be English-literate urbanites.

Even though the subtitled versions have long been familiar to and especially well-received among young Chinese via the Internet and video tapes, *Friends* has still failed to make its debut on CCTV, which planned to televise it on Channel I in the spring of 2005. The root cause is not a market problem for foreign television comedies, but the difficulty in the translation of humor, the most indispensable element of a situation comedy. Qin Mingxin, a director of the CCTV Art Center, pointed out that "too many slangy expressions and jokes make the rendering [of the comedy *Friends*] impossible...Language is a crucial point for a sitcom, thus improper translation may cut into the intended humorous effect". Besides *Friends*, several other television comedies, such as *Sex and the City*, are either unavailable to the mass audience in China, or poorly subtitled. One of the common features of the sitcoms is the seemingly untranslatable humor, which often requires creative solutions.

0.2 Research Issue and Questions

This paper presents a case study of the Chinese subtitling of the American sitcom *Friends*, focusing on the translation of its verbal humor. It hopes to shed some light on the subtitling in Chinese of popular TV series.

The paper is an attempt to theorize humor translation in a medium-specific environment by combining a humor theory with a translation theory. With the script of *Friends* as the corpus, the paper will tentatively confirm the directive function of General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) and Relevance Theory (RT) in translating humor in an audiovisual context and judge the validity of different translation strategies involved.

The paper will be developed by answering the following questions:

1) How is the internal structure of humorous text organized according to GTVH? What is the most important element of humor from the perspective of GTVH?

2) What should the translator take into consideration while subtitling humor according to GTVH and RT?

3) What is the humor in *Friends*? Is the humor in the original text successfully represented in the translated text? What translation strategies has the translator employed?

0.3 Methodology and Data Collection

The methodology of this paper is qualitative. After reviewing the related literature at home and abroad and establishing the theoretical framework for the paper, the author draws a conclusion that while

subtitling humor, the translator should infer the correct assumption envisaged by the screen player from the former's cognitive environment and then within limited time and space, provide the most relevant information to the target audience so as to achieve the resemblance of relevance degree between the source text and the translated text. Then the author applies this conclusion to the subtitling of *Friends* featuring humorous language. The data is from its English and Chinese transcripts and the data analysis is carried out following four steps: a. to locate where humor occurs in the original text; b. to categorize the humor there; c. to compare the translated text with the original text; and d. to justify the validity of the translation according to GTVH and RT.

In this thesis, both synthetic and analytic approaches will be used. The translatability of humorous dialogs is analyzed from different aspects under the guidance of a relevance-theoretic account of translation. Several translation principles and a criterion are advanced through analysis of many examples.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to provide a theoretical orientation for and practical help to translators in dealing with the numerous difficulties in translating English humorous dialogs into Chinese. In addition, this study can also be useful to persons concerned with the broader implication of inter-lingual and intercultural communication oriented in the concept of relevance in translation which focuses on contextual effects for TL receptors.

0.4 The structure of the Thesis

This paper consists of five chapters: (1) Introduction; (2) Literature

Review; (3) Relevance Theory and Humor Translation; (4) Verbal Humor

Translation in the Subtitling of *Friends*; and (5) Conclusion.

Chapter One Literature Review

is chapter aims to offer a general review of humor and the translation of humor. It is composed of two parts: (1) A brief introduction of views concerning the definition and theories of humor; (2) A review of studies on humor and its translation.

1.1 A General View of Humor

Humor is a common human phenomenon and the study of it has a long history that can be traced back to ancient Greece. Since it is complex, humor has been a difficult research topic. Researchers who are attracted by different aspects of humor have proposed a divergent set of explanations of it, and until now there has not been a unified definition that can be accepted by all explorers in this field.

1.1.1 The Definition of Humor

The term "humor" is derived from the Latin word for "liquid", "fluid" or "moisture" (*Encyclopedia American*, 14:563). According to ancient, medieval, and Renaissance physiology, there are four basic humors or fluids in the human body: i.e. choler or yellow bile, melancholy or black bile, blood, and phlegm (McGhee, 1979:4), and one's "temperament" is determined by the balanced or unbalanced humors (Roeckelein, 2002:12). Therefore, one man is regarded as being in "good humor" if his/her humors are "balanced", and those are thought to be "out of humor" if their humors are "unbalanced" (McGhee, 1979:5). By the

end of the 16th century, the word "humor" has become a general term for "disposition" or "temperament". Through the centuries, it gradually comes to refer to one's mood or state of mind in a sense (ibid).

As time went by, it gradually lost its original sense and came to be used in its present sense. However, as to its accurate definition, no agreement has been reached yet. Different people have different views, and thus produce different interpretations.

Aristotle defined humor in terms of incongruity: anything ludicrous contains some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive. Sigmund Freud held that the enjoyment of humor depended on the release of suppressed tendencies in humor behavior (*Encyclopedia International*: 9).

In modern times, two distinct meanings of humor are emphasized. That is to say, it is used to refer to "the mental experience of discovering and appreciating ludicrous or absurdly incongruous ideas, events or situations" on one hand, and "those attributes of an event that make us laugh, namely, attributes that lead us to perceive the event as ludicrous or humorous" on the other (ibid.6).

According to The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, humor reflects the satisfied feeling of people when they laugh at themselves as well as the social structure created by themselves. People have different explanations of humor. The simplest definition is: humor refers to all funny things.

The problems involved in defining humor are such that several scholars have doubted that an all-embracing definition of humor could be formulated (see Attardo 1994). However different the above-mentioned

definitions of humor are, we can still find something in common: the occurrence of a humorous act presupposes some essential factors. On the one hand, there must be human participants, who are capable of producing or perceiving what is funny and laughable. On the other hand, something must happen, or rather, there must be a funny stimulus, which can amuse people.

1.1 .2 Theories of Humor

The difficulty involved in defining humor, however, has not prevented scholars of various disciplines from probing into the topic of humor. In early times, researchers try to explore why we laugh mainly from the philosophical and psychological perspectives. Many ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Quintilian put forward early theories of humor and laughter that are still influential now.

It is Morreall (1983) who summarizes the viewpoints of the former researchers into three major types:

> (1) where humor is derived from a sensation of superiority over what is laughed at;
>
> (2) where humor derives from a sensation of psychological relief;
>
> (3) where humor derives from the perception of incongruity in what is laughed at.

<div align="right">(Palmer, 1994:94)</div>

Generally speaking, these three types of theories are respectively termed as: the superiority theory, the relief theory and the incongruity

theory. All these theories attempt to explain why we laugh from different angles.

Superiority theory mainly checks the negative element of humor, i.e. its aggressive side. It assumes that we laugh because what we laugh at (what is commonly referred to as the `butt of the joke') have some failing or defect, or because they find themselves at a disadvantage position or suffer some small misfortune so as to reflect our own superiority. This theory can be found in the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Hobbes. Plato suggests that humor is some kind of malice towards people that are being considered relatively powerless. Hobbes further explains that humans are in a constant competition with each other, looking for the shortcomings of other people. He considers laughter as an expression of a sudden realization that we are better than others, an expression of sudden glory.

"Relief theory maintains that humor 'release' tensions, psychic energy, or that humor releases one from inhibitions, conventions and laws." (Attardo 1994: 50) The theory does not really give an explanation as to why we find humor funny and can in fact be seen as theory of laughter. It is agreed that Freud is the chief exponent of this theory and his discussions on it are found in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1963). Freud explains that this "psychic energy" in our body is built as an aid for suppressing feelings in taboo within the human body, has no areas, like sex or death. This energy continuously builds up further use and therefore has to be released. When this energy is released we experience laughter, not only because of the release of this energy, but also because these taboo thoughts are being entertained. This release is

spontaneous and expresses itself in laughter. This theory is popular among those who believe that laughter is beneficial for one's health.

Incongruity theory, also known as incongruity-resolution theory, which virtually dominates the contemporary psychological research on humor, is one of the influential approaches in the study of humor and laughter. The central claim is that "laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage" (Attardo, 1997:396) The main supporters of this theory include philosophers such as Kant, Schopenhauer and Bergson, etc. According to them, "incongruity is at the core of all humor experiences". That is to say, the basic element involved in humor is "something unexpected, out of context, inappropriate, unreasonable, illogical, exaggerated, and so on" (McGhee, 1979:9-10). Generally speaking, incongruity theories treat humor as a kind of frustrated expectation, and humor is inherent in incongruity.

The above-reviewed theories of humor can be summarized as general or classical. Just like the different definitions of humor, none of these theories is complete or universal. However, the benefit of these theories just lies in their generality and diversity. They point out the basic direction, meanwhile not narrowing the mind down to a single path. Equipped with the basic concepts and theories of humor, we gain enough strength to move further to the study of humor under a linguistic framework. It is on the basis of incongruity-resolution theory that Attardo and Raskin focusing on semantic aspects of humor has proposed the General Theory of Verbal Humor.

1.1.3 The GTVH

From the 1980s to the present, lots of linguists have paid much attention to the linguistic researches on verbal humor and made great contribution to it. Influential linguistic researches on verbal humor include the Semantic Script-based Theory of Humor(SSTH) proposed by Raskin (1985) and its further development, i.e. the General Theory of Verbal Humor(GTVH) advanced by Attardo and Raskin (1991) with further revisions in Attardo (1997) (Ritchie, 2004: 69).

According to the SSTH, a joke carrying text needs to satisfy two basic conditions. On the one hand, the text should be consistent, fully or in part, with two different scripts; on the other, the two scripts with which the joke carrying text is consistent are opposite in some way. And humor lies in the special relation of script oppositeness (Simpson, 2003:30).

A script is such an organized chunk of information about something, a cognitive structure internalized by the speaker which provides him with information on how the world is organized, including how one acts in it; in the broadest sense it is an object (real or imaginary), an event, an action, a quality, etc.

(Raskin, 1983:199, quoted in Attardo 1994:198)

However, this theory assumes that script opposition is the most important factor, ignoring other parameters that have an influence in the funniness of a humor. The GTVH is an attempt by Attardo to build a linguistically sound model of verbal humor after the SSTH by Raskin,

and the central idea of which is that a joke depends on the contributions from six different knowledge resources that are as follows:

(1) Script opposition (SO)

It refers to the fact that a joke must involve two opposing scripts, which is also at the core of the Semantic Script-based Theory of Humor.

2) Logical mechanism (LM)

It represents the mechanism in which two opposing scripts are brought together in one joke.

(3) Situation (SI)

It refers to the setting in terms of characters, objects, location, etc. described in the text of a joke.

(4) Target   (TA)

It refers to the "butt", i.e. the person, group or entity which is being ridiculed,   attacked or presented in a negative light.

(5) Narrative strategy (NS)

It is the linguistic structure or style for presenting the joke.

(6) Language (LA)

It refers to the actual linguistic units used in the text of a joke

(Ritchie, 2004:70-71)

The GTVH is one of the most convincing humor theories from a linguistic perspective, and it's advantageous in its hierarchical arrangement of six humorous Knowledge Resources (KRs) and being used as one of the formal tool to compare similarities of two jokes or humorous texts. It is very useful in humor translation studies. First it can

help translators of humor better understand what humor is and how it is structured and then to compare the translated version with the original one by checking whether these KRs have been reproduced adequately.

1.2 A Review of the Translation of Humor

Humor has long been a topic discussed by scholars in both the West and the East. Studies and explorations of humor and its translation have always been going on in the academic field in spite of the pace being rather slow because of the complexity and the sheer difficulty attached to the very topic- --- humor and translation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to make an informative complete list for all that has been done on the issue, but it is possible and important to acquire some knowledge of the major development in the area.

1.2.1 In the West

The study of humor in the west can be traced back to the Aristotelian and Platonic age. Many western philosophers such as Kant, and Hobbes, and writers such as George Eliot, and Baudelaire have proposed theories of why we laugh. But in the field of translation studies, humor translation has, for a long time, been ignored.

What chiefly dominated the area on the initial stage of development is the prevailing opinion: non-translatability of humor. After Heri Bergson (1928) distinguished the humor expressed by language from that created by language, the following research has contributed greatly to the discussion of translatability and the untranslatability of humor.

Until the end of 1980's, researches in this field have subconsciously

agreed upon the techniques of translating humor. Anne-Marie Laurian considered that humor could meet blocks in comprehension even in monolingual practice. Its transference from one language to another seemed to be a compromise. She also holds that although humor is always treated as something untranslatable, the translation of it is still often tried, though sometimes easily, sometimes with difficulty. It was the required effort, imagination and creativity that set an untranslatable image for this activity. (Laurian, 1989: 1-2)

Debra S. Rapphaelson-West held that similar to translating poetry, in which the form of the language was an integral part of its original appeal, in translating humor, the translator should distinguish between three types of humorous writings: linguistic, cultural and universal in an order of increasing translatability, and that the corresponding translation approaches should range from direct translation to "taking the idea and writing a target-culture from scratch" (Rapphaelson-West, 1989:134).

Peter Newmark tackled the problem of pun translation by saying that pun is "usually for the purpose of arousing laughter or amusement, and sometimes also to concentrate meaning" (Newmark, 1998: 219). If the purpose of the pun is merely to raise laughter, it could sometimes be 'compensated' by another pun on a word with a different but associated meaning. But Newmark didn't suggest the optimal degree of compensation probably owing to his view that "the translation of pun is of marginal importance" (Newmark, 1998:217). These researches brought a preliminary systematic frame for humor translation and inspired further study in this regard.

1.2.2 In China

In China, an article of Jin Shaoyu (金绍禹) in a collection of translation papers (1984) touches the issue of humor translation: "the involved difficulty is no less than that in poetry translation. Sometimes it may even be untranslatable".

Xiao Sa(萧飒)considered that the oldest and the most numerous humorous pieces in China were the so-called "xiaohua"(笑话，"jokes" or "jests"). Among these jests, many involved "played on Chinese character", a device noted from the features of Chinese language itself. Xiao wrote:

> These humorous stories (employing character play) are best called native specialty for they can only grow and be consumed on the motherland and find no way to make foreign "money"---being translated into other languages, other characters…. Generally speaking, jokes with language structure involved are untranslatable.
>
> (萧飒，1989: 231)

Mao Ronggui (1992) stated his viewpoints on translatability of humor. He divided humor into situational and non-situational ones. The former covered those devoid of linguistic variations, and were translatable, while the latter depended on the play on linguistic elements, were difficult to translate. Specific problems arose from three ways: humor produced by the sound and spelling of the word itself; humor involving cultural background; and humor related to the subtle working of language. He holds that in the process of translating, what should be

advocated is recreation with inspiration. Accordingly he offered two solutions to these problems: annotation and compensation(毛荣贵，1992: 56).

Liu Miqing also specified the involved difficulties in his book *Style and Translation* by saying that the wittiness embedded in humorous and punning languages can easily be lost in translation, thus they are almost untranslatable. He also noted that rhyming is untranslatable in most cases.

> Some of these backgrounds are the barriers in the way of transference... Humorous and punning language can hardly be translated because humor comes from the witty use of words, and the wit easily vanishes in translating process... Rhyming always produces humor... Rhyming is generally untranslatable; proclaim becomes a necessity in translating... Puns always refuse to be translated, as in "you reckon your Dodge would help you up to all these dodges again?".
>
> (刘宓庆，1998: 56)

If the above studies seem to reveal the prevailing opinion of the untranslatability of humor, and the futileness of attempting translation, researchers in the third millennium have displayed much courage and boldness in tackling this issue.

Ouyang Lifeng (2000) takes a functional approach to examine humor translation and considers that translator needs to alter the fact expressed in the source text to reproduce its humor. He further points out that functional translation is a significant translation theory to guide humor translation and that domestication strategy is an effective approach

to solve the difficulties in humor translation. He concludes that adaptation is an effective approach and should be regarded as a theoretical guideline in this respect(欧阳利锋，2000: 124).

Other translation approaches have been suggested since then, such as "replacement", "coincidence" and "sketch"; "literal translation", "adaptation", "functional translation" and "annotation"(Dong Lirong，2001:74; Jiang Xuejun，2001: 36). However adaptation seems to become the most commonly recognized one. Feasible and systematic theoretical frame in this aspect is rarely found.

It was not until 2002 that a study of translation of humorous from the relevance-theoretic approach was made by Xu Qingli and Wang Fuxiang (2002). In their paper they present an analysis about how humorous utterances are produced and perceived from the perspective of relevance theory. Liu Naishi (2005) proposes that relevance theory is a good complement to the incongruity-resolution theory in that it explains the underlying cognitive mechanism involved in humor comprehension, etc. These explorations have brought a preliminary systematic frame for humor translation.

Chapter Two Relevance Theory and Humor Translation

Relevance theory, proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995), has given a completely new and reasonable explanation to human's cognition and communication. Their main proposals are a principle of relevance and optimal relevance. Gutt (1991) firstly applied relevance theory to translation. And he proposes the translation notion of relevance theory, i.e. relevance translation theory, which makes us find everything fresh and new.

2.1 Relevance Theory

Relevance theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson has been considered as one of the most influential approaches to human communication from the cognitive perspective in recent years. Though it has encountered some criticism, relevance theory has been still accepted as one of the most authorized theories in pragmatics and widely applied to the analysis of discourse analysis.

2.1.1 Definition of Relevance

Sperber & Wilson (2001:119) were trying to make a working definition of relevance as a useful theoretical concept. Relevance is defined by Sperber and Wilson in terms of cognitive effects and processing effort. Cognitive effects are achieved when newly-presented information interacts with a context of existing assumptions in one of the following three ways:

(a) by strengthening an existing assumption;

(b) by contradicting and eliminating an existing assumption;

(c) by combining with an existing assumption to yield a contextual implication (that is, conclusions derived from new information and context together, but from neither new information or context alone).

And they proposed the following definition of relevance: An assumption is relevant in a context if and only if it has some contextual effect in that context. (ibid: 123) . However the definition missed the fact that relevance is also, and more importantly, a comparative concept, for relevance itself is a matter of degree. By comparing the concept of relevance with a more common word of flexibility, Sperber and Wilson (2001:124-125) elaborate on the degree of relevance and thus improve the definition of relevance by adopting an extent-conditions format as below:

> Extent condition 1: an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large.
>
> Extent condition 2: an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small.
>
> (Sperber & Wilson, 2001: 125)

According to relevance theory, relevance and understanding are regarded as two sides of the same coin (Wilson, 1994:38). An utterance in verbal communication may create "precise and predictable expectations of relevance" by which the hearer can be guided to the correct interpretation of the speaker's utterance. In the framework of relevance theory, relevance is given while context is a variable (S&W, 2001:142),

and "every aspect of communication and cognition is governed by the search for relevance" (Wilson, 1994:46).

2.1.2 Principles of Relevance

Sperber and Wilson have proposed two principles of relevance, the first termed as cognitive principle and the second communicative principle. The two principles go like follows:

Cognitive Principle of Relevance:

Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.

Communication Principle of Relevance:

Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

(S & W, 2001:260)

According to Cognitive Principle, humans have an automatic tendency to maximize relevance (W & S, 2004), that is to say, in verbal communication, the hearer attempts to process the utterance as productively as possible, aiming to get as great a cognitive effect as possible for as small as possible a processing cost.

Communicative Principle of Relevance is based on Cognitive Principle of Relevance, in which the notion of optimal relevance is the key to relevance theory, which is presented below:

Presumption of Optimal Relevance

(a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it

(b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences.

(S & W, 2001:270)

The notion of optimal relevance describes the expectation of the audience of an act of ostensive communication that his attempt at interpretation will yield adequate contextual effects at minimal processing cost. That is to say, "to be consistent with the principle of relevance, an interpretation does not actually have to be optimally relevant to the addressee; it must merely have seemed so to the communicator."(S&W, 2001:169). In one word, in verbal communication, the speaker always chooses the utterance that is as relevant as possible to the hearer from the communicative side, i.e. from the speaker's point of view. And this set a higher limit on the level of relevance the communicator intends the hearer to expect. This is the answer of RT as to how hearers can infer what the intended interpretation or meaning of an utterance is: it is the interpretation that is consistent with the principle of relevance, and there is never more than one interpretation that fulfils this condition. (Gutt, 2001:32-33)

2.2 Relevance Theory and Translation

Traditional translation studies usually focus on the ready-made source text and target text and regard translation as a process with the

important role of translator often being neglected. Relevance Theory has brought about a fresh perspective for translation studies--- it views the whole translating process instead of the text as the subject of study.

Relevance account of translation is the result of Ernst Gutt applying Relevance Theory (RT) by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1986) in translation studies. His concentrated research in this regard can be found in *Translation and Relevance: cognition and Context.* (Gutt, 1991). He points out that the nature of translation is an interpretive use of language and, like any other communicative activities, aims at achieving optimal relevance, the relevance that allows readers to gain maximal contextual effect with minimal processing effort. In the framework of relevance, translation is a special kind of communication --- inter-lingual communication. Since this kind of communication involves two ostensive-inferential cognitive processes, the guarantee of successful communication is to make sure that optimal relevance transference happens.

According to him, the translator, as a part of communication, should set up his own communicative intention after accurate judge of the cognitive context and expectations of the target receivers and then adopt corresponding translation methods so as to make them gain adequate contextual effect with small processing effort.

Inspired by RT that human beings have two different ways of entertaining thoughts---"they can entertain them descriptively, in virtue of their being true of some state of affairs, and they can entertain them interpretively, in virtue of the interpretive resemblance they bear to some other thoughts" (Speber & Wilson 1986: 224-231), Gutt also

made a distinction between descriptive use and interpretive use in translation study:

> If a translation is seen only in terms of a relationship it has in some way with a source text, then this will be a case of interpretive use; If a translation is intended to survive on its own, without the receiver ever being aware of the existence of a source text, then this will be a case of descriptive use.
>
> (Hatim 2001:39)

Gutt insists that descriptive translations have been called translations only because it has been more economical to modify an existing translation than to start a new text from scratch and it falls out of translation studies. He advocated that a translation should be a receptor language text that interpretively resembled the original (Gutt 2004:105). That's to say, when translating the translator should bear the original context in his mind and have a thorough understanding of the context in order to meet the expectation of the target readers.

2.3 A Relevance-theoretic Account of Humor Translation

Within the relevance-theoretic framework, translation is defined as an inter-lingual or intra-lingual ostensive-inferential interpretive act, in which the comprehension and interpretation of utterance depend on optimal relevance. As a special type of translation, humor translation also undergoes such a dynamic process, aiming to achieve optimal interpretive resemblance.

As a cognitive theory of communication, relevance theory serves as a cognitive approach to humor in which a mental search for an optimally relevant interpretation covers the processing of humor and the derivation of humorous effects (Curco, 1997). "Humorists may be willing to keep relevant information to themselves, be obscure, be ambiguous, etc, for the sake of pursuing the creation of humorous effects, but the principle of relevance invariably applies to both humorous and non-humorous discourses" (Yus, 2005: 320).

Since humor is quite often created to reveal or imply something; that is, to achieve some special communicative intention, though indirectly. The interpretation of conversational humor usually involves an element of indirectness. This element of indirectness reduces the degree of relevance, and thus calls for extra processing effort on the part of the hearer. On hearing a humorous dialogs, the hearer can rarely obtain enough cognitive effects directly or immediately from the initial context, left over from her processing of the preceding utterances. To interpret the utterance as consistent with the principle of relevance, he has to expand the context to incorporate what is going on in the immediate environment or encyclopedia knowledge until he has enough effects to make the utterance optimally relevant as the speaker might have foreseen.

Humor translation, with its communicative involves two communicators and two recipients, among whom the translator acts as both a communicator and a recipient. Like general translation, humor translation includes two processes to seek for optimal relevance. In different and often disparate linguistic and cultural environments, humor translation consistent with the optimal relevance will successfully

recapture the intention of the original humorous message, evoking in the target audience similar pleasant and playful effects.

Translation is a kind of interpretive use of language which aims to achieve a high degree of resemblance between the original author's intention and the target readers' expectations. As a special type of translation, humor translation is also an interpretive of language, which aims to achieve optimal resemblance between the source text and the target text. The principle of relevance heavily constrains the humor translation with regard to both what it is intended to convey and how it is expressed.

Chapter Three Humor Translation in the Subtitling of
Friends

In this chapter, we will take a close look at the Chinese subtitling in *Friends*. Before we go on with the examination of the translation of humor in it, we will provide some information about subtitling, and try to appreciate the humor in *Friends*. The focus of course falls on the study of the verbal humor translation in *Friends*. A large number of examples are picked up for the investigation. These examples, the writer believes, are among the most representative .

3.1 Subtitling

Subtitling, is one of the two modes for transferring messages contained in a movie or TV program through different cultures, the other being dubbing, which is "15 times as expensive as subtitling" (Gottlieb, 2004: 248) and is now gradually losing its popularity due to its high cost and a rising interest in the subtitled versions among the young language learners. In this part, the writer will provide some information about subtitling, including its definition, characteristics and constraints.

3.1.1 The Definition of Subtitling

Subtitling can be defined as "the translation of the spoken source text of an audiovisual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product". (Karamitroglou, 2000: 5) Chinese subtitles usually consist of one or two lines of an   average

maximum length of 35 characters and are presented simultaneously on the screen with the dialogue or narration going on in the source language. As a rule, subtitles are placed at the bottom of the picture and are either centered or left aligned. This simultaneous provision of meaning in two different languages, one in oral and the other in written text, is thus a new form of language transfer originated in films and boosted by television programs. The concept is sometimes used synonymously with "captioning", while captions or top-titles are pieces of textual information usually inserted by the director to identify names, places or dates relevant to the story. In this thesis, this distinction is still maintained unless otherwise stated.

Subtitling can be linguistically divided into (a) Intra-lingual subtitling (in the original language) and (b) Inter-lingual subtitling. Intra-lingual subtitling includes subtitling of domestic programs for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and subtitling of foreign-language programs for the language learners. Intra-lingual subtitling is vertical in the sense that it involves taking speech down in writing, changing the mode but not the language. Inter-lingual subtitling , on the other hand, is diagonal, in the sense that the subtitler crosses over from speech in one language to writing in another, thus changing both the mode and the language. Both types "take place in the same audio-visual context; they both involve a conversion of spoken language into written text, and in both forms the amount of dialogue has to be reduced to meet the technical conditions of the medium and the reading capacity of viewers." (Linde 1999:1)　And what is important is that both of them involve the difference between speech and the written system. For example, written forms are usually

more concise or better organized than speech that usually betrays the trace of the speaker's thought.

Another distinction can be drawn from the technical aspect rather than the linguistic processes of subtitling. It can either be "open", that is the target text constitutes a physical part of the translated film and is transmitted together with the film sound and pictures, or "closed", usually optional, that is, the target text is commonly transmitted as teletext. In this thesis, subtitling refers to inter-lingual and open subtitling, unless otherwise stated.

3.1.2 The Characteristics of Subtitling

It is clear now that subtitling share many similarities to literary translation, while it bears its own special characteristics that make its translation different from the general translation practices. Therefore, it's a necessity to fully understand the differences between translation for the screen and translation of a text as well as the unique characteristics of subtitling, which are quite helpful in the real process of subtitling.

In 1984, Raphael Nir already referred to subtitling as a "double conversation" from one language to another and from one medium to another (Nir, 1984:84). A more cogent analysis of the subtitling process is found in Henrik Gottlieb's idea of "diagonal translation". He points out that inter-lingual subtitling, "being two-dimensional `jaywalks' (crossovers) from source-language speech to target-language writing." (1994: 104)

In his *Subtitling: Diagonal Translation* (Gottlieb, 1994: 101 — 121), he points out that the subtitles must "possess the musical ears of a

interpreter, the stylistic sensitivity of a literary translator, the visual acuteness of a film cutter, and the esthetic sense of a book designer", for the two-dimensional and diagonal nature of subtitle. Normally, translation and interpreting are "horizontal, one-dimensional types of verbal transmission" in which "speech remains speech and writing remains writing" (Gottlieb, Subtitling 1994: 104), while subtitling can be either "vertical" or "diagonal".

In the process of subtitling foreign movies and TV series, the subtitler enters into a "two-dimensional" inter-lingual communication, as contrary to traditional translation and interpretation, which are "horizontal, one-dimensional" types of verbal transmission.

During the process of subtitling, there are four simultaneous channels for the translator to consider (Gottlieb, 1998: 245):

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. and the non-verbal visual channel: picture composition and flow.

As Gambier (2003: 178) explains, subtitling is translating "if translation is not viewed as a purely word-for-word transfer but as encompassing a set of strategies that might include summarizing, paraphrasing, etc.", and "if translation is viewed holistically, taking into

consideration the genre, the film-maker's or programmer's style, the wide diversity of audiences with different socio-cultural and social-linguistic backgrounds, the needs and expectations of viewers (who may, for instance, have different reading speed and habits) and the multimodality of audiovisual communication (language, images, sound)".

3.1.3 The Constraints of Subtitling

We have to admit that all translation is necessarily constrained, but audiovisual translation especially subtitling is constrained in a more intricate and complex way. As Xia Ping indicates "translation is fundamentally a decision making process under constraints. The constraints affect the quality of translation practices and the quality of end products always dictate the realization of an ideal translation". (Xia, 2000: 210-211) Subtitling translation is no exception and especially comprises many constraints, which primarily imposed by the medium itself.

Subtitling is a type of "constraint translation" (Maria Grun and Cay Dollerup, 2003), regarding its limitations on time and space. It can only "consist of one or two lines of an average maximum length of 35 characters" (Gottlieb, 1998: 245). While reading of the text takes place within one medium, a film appeals to eyes and ears simultaneously. In other words, the implied messages are not only hidden in the language but can be found visually and orally.

Basil Hatim and Ian Mason summarize four kinds of main constraints on subtitling from a more general perspective (1990: 78-79):

1. The shift in mode from speech to writing. This has the result that certain

features of speech (non-standard dialect, emphatic devices such as intonation, code-switching and style-shifting, turn-taking) will not automatically be represented in the written form of the target text.

2. Factors which govern the medium or channel in which meaning is to be conveyed. These are physical constraints of available space and the pace of the sound-track dialogue.

3. The reduction of the source text as a consequence of (2) above. Because of this the translator has to reassess coherence strategies in order to maximize the retrievability of intended meaning from a more concise target language version.

4. The requirement of matching the visual image. As Chaume points out, the acoustic and visual images are inseparable in translating, coherence is required between the subtitled text and the moving image itself. Thus, matching the subtitle to what is actually visible on screen may at times create an additional constraint, ie. the retrievability of intended meaning from a more concise target language version.

Aiming at analyzing different constraints that gravitate around audiovisual translation, Mayoral Roberto et al. attempted to offer a systematic gradation of the various degree of constraints that operate upon different types of communication or translation acts. "Depending on the medium on which the message becomes coded, either aural or visual, and operating with the restrictive concept of `synchrony', understood as the `agreement between signals emitted for the purpose of communicating the same message', they established a taxonomy consisting of 5 types of

synchrony, closely related to the axioms of time, space, content, phonetics
and character", (Mayoral, Kelly and Gallardo 1988: 359), which are listed
as follows:

> Synchrony of time: agreement in time of different signals that
> communicate a unit of information;
>
> Synchrony of space: the signals occupy neither more nor less space than
> that corresponds to them;
>
> Synchrony of content: the meanings transmitted by different signals
> contradict neither each other nor the whole message;
>
> Synchrony of phonetics: synchrony of sound signals of spoken dialogue
> with visible speech movements on the screen
>
> Synchrony of character: the harmony between the image of the character
> and his or her voice and words.

In the case of subtitling, it is typified by a differential of 3 to 4
different which is mainly conditioned by synchrony of time, space,
content and character.

These constraints lead to the problem of selection as the translator
has to analyze the source text material carefully to decide what should be
transferred to the target text and what can or must be left out.

3.1.4 A Relevance-theoretic account of Subtitling

According to Relevance Theory, as a part of communication,
translation falls into ostensive-inferential model. In translation, the
translator, both the audience of the original text and the conveyer of the

target text, is involved in two rounds of ostensive-inferential processes. Firstly, the translator engages in inferential communication: perceive the ST writer's intention according to the evidences provided by the ST, that is, to get an interpretation of the utterance consistent with the (communicative) principle of relevance. Secondly, the translator has to proceed to relay what he has got in the first round to the target reader group in an ostensive way, to be more specific, give a translated utterance consistent with the (communicative) principle of relevance.

In subtitling, different than other translation activities, the ST writer or the screen player conveys his intention with both linguistic and non-linguistic evidence such as pictures, images, and sound. Therefore, in order to comprehend his intention, the translator should hinge on the other information as well. It is the same case with the second round. While relaying the conveyed information in an ostensive way, the translator should also take into consideration that his translated version is put into a screen and whether the information he provided is already included in images, pictures, and sound, etc. According to Relevance Theory, the subtitles are "interpretively resembling" to the original dialogue. Therefore, it is correct to say that screen translation is a special mode of translation activity within medium-specific constraints.

3.2 Humor in *Friends*

It is generally acknowledged that both in the West and in China, that the potential attractions of *Friends* to today's viewers lie in its cast, performance, the American life style inside and especially its humor. It is said that a large amount of money has been put into maintaining the

quality of humorous scripts, in addition to slick filming and editing, and first-class soundtracks. The abundant and high-quality humorous language about diversified topics make *Friends* fall into a good corpora for humor research.

The humor in *Friends* revolves in one way or another around concerns of American people at the six friends' age: their concepts, catchphrases, and ideology; their post-college life, or echoes of student years; their attitudes towards work or the state of joblessness. In order to ensure the success of this long-running laugh fest, the screenwriters employed various techniques to deliver humor. These techniques include: irony, for example, in most of Chandler's lines; wordplay, such as oxymorons, puns, etc.; wit, as in many one-liner jokes; ridiculous gestures and movements; adages, often in the form of parody "laws" of nature; deliberate ambiguity and confusion with reality; unexpected outcome, such as a witty punchline (surprise); self-inflicted embarrassing situation, e.g. losing one's swimming trunks after a dive; comic sounds or inherently funny words with certain sounds that make them amusing in a particular language; paraprosdokian (a figure of speech that uses an unexpected ending to a series or a phrase) and many more others.

There are both linguistic and visual codes and symbols in *Friends* that the American audience will immediately recognize. Much of the humor in this sitcom relies on the recognizability of the language used by its characters, on the associations it raises in its audience. In such sense, *Friends* could be characterized as a humorous text, in that its humor is not merely at the level of individual jokes. It does have its share of one-liners,

but in addition there are more subtle forms of humor, such as allusion, irony, and inter-textuality. It could be argued that much of the humorousness in *Friends* derives from its creating a kind of social and cultural atmosphere recognizable or even familiar to the American target audience.

To sum up, the challenges *Friends* poses to translators have to do with both intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic elements. In the former group there is the kind of humor where the effect derives from language-related elements, such as slang, wordplay, and allusive humor; whereas in the latter group humor is created by means of culture-related elements.

In *Friends*, humor can be categorized into three groups: universal humor; culture-based humor; and verbal humor/puns.

1) Universal Humor

This is a sort of humor that the KRs involved can be appreciated universally and no special use of language or culture-denoted topics have been used. Therefore, there are little difficulties in translating this kind of humor to target audience with different cognitive environment. The key point is to put the original humor in the most effective way so as to decrease the processing effort of the audience who has to "read" subtitles. In addition, given the fact that the receptor can get extra contextual effect with more processing effort from humorous utterances, the translator should also let his audience to enjoy such fun by leaving the conversational implicature for audience to infer rather than explicitize it.

2) Cultural Humor

It is well-known that humor often varies by locality and does not

easily transfer from one culture to another. This happens because humor often relies on a cultural context, and someone not understanding the context will usually not understand the humor. So many humors and dramatic effects in *Friends* do pose great challenges for the translator.

It is the result of the use of cultural-specific KRs that are humorous to the source text audience. In sitcom, popular stars' names or classic books are often mentioned to achieve humorous effect, but for the target audience, due to the difference in their cognitive environment, the semantic translation will definitely fail the humorous intention. However, humor, in its nature, is a form of entertainment and a form of human communication intended to make people laugh and feel happy. So the translator should take into consideration the cognitive environment of the target audience and make corresponding adjustments within the constraints of subtitling.

3) Verbal Humor

Verbal humor, or punning is to play on words, or rather to play with the form and meaning of words, for a witty or humorous effect. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of puns: a. Homonyms: These are words or word phrases having the same sound and form, but with two or more distinct meanings. b. Homophones: These are words having the same sound, or almost the same sound, but differing in form and meaning are used. Puns of this type are usually humorous. In light of GTVH, in punning, two scripts are presented simultaneously in the same situation. Their overlap may be partial or total but their semantic meaning must be opposed to some extent. (Hempelmann 2004:381-392)

3.3 Features of the Subtitles in *Friends*

1) Trendy Oral English

The television characters' use of language generally mirrors or even sets the trend of language use in the real world. For 10 years, *Friends* has always garnered the most popular American oral English: the innovative sentence structure, the new words and phrases, the updated expression, etc. A study conducted by University of Toronto researchers reveals that the language of *Friends* is always in the vanguard of new changes in American English.

"This research focuses on the words the *Friends* characters use to emphasize or intensify, such as *very*, *really* and *so* (as in I'm so sorry)," says Professor Sali Tagliamonte of linguistics, one of the co-authors of the study, *So Cool; So Weird; So Innovative: The Use of Intensifiers in the Television Series Friends*. According to sociolinguistic research, these intensifiers change constantly in language, providing an ideal way to tap into current trends in American English. At the beginning of the 20th century, *very* was the most common intensifier in American English, then *really* (as in "I'm really happy") took its place, says Tagliamonte. But in *Friends*, the word *so* (as in "He's so weird") is taking the lead. The study also revealed that the use of *so* in the sitcom peaked during the years when the show hit the highest ratings and receded when the show's popularity waned. This suggests that the use of new forms of language in *Friends*, like the intensifier *so*, makes TV dialogue more trendy to its viewers.

2) Each Character's Respective Comic Possibilities

Through individualized language this Emmy-winning comedy successfully shaped six young friends with striking characteristics, which makes it difficult for the translator to reproduce such vivid images through subtitling:

Monica Geller

Monica plays essential role in *Friends*. Her apartment is the gathering place not only because it is big and clean but also as a chef, she takes interests in making delicious food that definitely attracts Joey and Chandler who live next door. Central Perk coffee house is right under her apartment. Monica's character seems to generate the least humor---or popularity--- perhaps because someone who is so sensible and organized is no fun. She tends to be the butt of humor. She speaks in a "biting and bossy" manner . She shouts loudly, orders strictly, complains fussily, but always laughs happily. She finally marries Chandler.

Ross Geller

Elder Brother of Monica. He has always had strong love feelings for Rachel. A successful professor of paleontology leads him to be often teased by the other 5 friends about his profession and also the most bookish one of the six. Ross marries three times, all of which end up with divorce. He is always teased as "marriage terminator". His speech has always been strict, rigorous and scientific, "over-pronouncing every single word", a speech manner making people around him suffering.

Rachel Green

Monica's classmate and best friend in high school. She was born in a wealthy family, simple-minded but kind hearted. After escaping from the arranged marriage to Central Perk where the other five were enjoying

coffee as usual, she became one of them and began to live independently. She worked her way up from Central Perk's waitress to Ralph Lauren style maven. She is a typical 'American sweetheart': beautiful, lovely, fussy, spoiled, gossipy, etc. Her love story is the main part of *Friends*. She is not so much a comic stereotype as a glamorous icon.

Joey Tribbiani

Joey Tribbiani is Chandler's roommate, an Italian American. He was an unsuccessful actor, always waiting for audition. Fortunately, he didn't have to pay rents with the help of Chandler and could enjoy free food in Monica's apartment. He was kind and sweet in his personality, especially successful with women. Later, after his performance in a soap opera, his acting business thrived. With probably the poorest education background, Joey speaks rudely and sometimes "illogically". He seldom cares about the hearer's possible reaction and always speaks out his ideas frankly---may be too frankly to be accepted. Another interesting point is his poor vocabulary, which makes hearers as well as the audience laugh out for his simplicity and stupity.

Phoebe Buffay

Monica's ex-roommate, who is forever optimistic. Brought up as a fatherless child, Phoebe is a weird yet loveable blond, who has become a personal masseuse. Phoebe often performs at the 'Central Perk' coffee house, and strongly believes in herself. Her personality can be best concluded with the words of her husband Mike," She is wonderfully weird." She is a vegetarian, never eating "something having face"; she is also an environmentalist, not wearing fur; a mystic, claiming herself feel

something beyond the world. In her dialogue with characters in the sitcom, she speaks boldly and even "abnormally"---to express her hope for a community which is supposed to be beautiful; to satirize phony people and events in this "money-and-machine" society; to make up stories, fantasies and music to let off her discontent, etc.

Chandler Bing

Funny man Chandler Bing, Ross' best friend and college roommate, and a financially secure data processor. Despite being rich, the other 5 have no idea what his profession is. But he always helps his roommate Joey when he was in financial trouble. Being the son of a cabaret dancing father (a gay) and a romance novelist mother, Chandler became more or less cynical and over self-protected which directly influences his speech manner. He avoids responsibility, stuttering in giving promise to his lover. He mocks celebrities with sarcastic tone, using humor as a "defense mechanism". He speaks softly, trying to be gentle, though always being seen as a symbol of a 'gay'.

3) Abundant Culture-related Elements

Friends is deeply rooted in American culture, which incisively and vividly reflects the cultural information embedded in *Friends*. This successful sitcom describes almost every aspect of the Americans' lives: from the American character to their family life, from their religions to their way of eating and clothing, from the American holidays to the cultural diversity in the U.S, from education to leisure activities, from the American outlook on life to the American dream. It introduces to us the lifestyles, attitudes, customs, and traditions which are characteristic of

Americans. Therefore, to translate the cultural information in subtitling becomes a hard nut for the translator to crack.

3.4 The Translation of Verbal Humor in *Friends*

Humor is a verbal communicative activity taken by communicator to arouse humorous effects in the audience. Humor translation is a process to reconstruct the humor in the target text. In the process of translation, the translator should convey the optimal relevance in the source text to the readers. That is to say, the principle of successful humor translation is transference of optimal relevance from the source text to the target text. According to Gutt (2004: 195), "for communication success, the translator has to ensure that his intentions and the expectations of the audience will be in line; so he chooses a suitable approach and makes sure that the audience is aware of and in agreement with his choice". As for which method should be adopted properly, it just depends on the specific context. The translator may choose suitable translation methods to reach his goal of achieving optimal resemblance.

The translators of the subtitles of *Friends* adopted various flexible methods in the subtitling of the humorous dialogs. When judging the Chinese subtitles of *Friends*, we have to examine not only the extent to which they match with the original but also the degree of successful conveyance of the humorous effect. In the next part, the author will try to make an analysis of translation strategies applied in *Friends'* Chinese subtitle translation in detail.

Gutt, working within the framework of relevance-theoretic account of translation, proposes two main strategies of translation which are consistent with the framework of translating humorous dialogs, that is,

direct translation and indirect translation.

3.4.1   Relevance-theoretic Direct Translation

Many theorists, especially those who concern with literary translation pay considerable attention to the preservation of the stylistic properties of texts. They all aim to obtain such faithfulness as preservation of both content and style. As for this issue, Gutt brought forward the approach --- direct translation. In the case of direct translation, the translator will take the responsibility to understand the original text in the original context and then convey or reconstruct the original contextual assumptions to the target audience, trying to make sure that the logical and contextual implications of the translated texts are as much as possible identical to the ones that the original speakers intended.

In a word, direct translation is dependent on interpretive use: it's effect relies on a relationship of complete interpretive resemblance between the original and its translation. On this recognition, we can now consider a definition of direct translation as: A receptor language utterance is a direct translation of a source language utterance if and only if it purports to interpretively resemble the original completely in the context envisaged for the original. (Gutt, 2001:163)

Since translators have many views about how to translate, it is very common that most translators would choose the direct way to interpret what the original text wants to convey. In the translation of humorous dialogs, humorous effect could also be reproduced by the method of direct translation. And direct translation usually covers two methods as follow:

3.4.1.1 Borrowing

This is a kind of translation in which the source language word is transferred directly to the target language. It is used to fill a semantic gap in the target language. Here is an example in *Friends'* subtitles:

Season 6, Episode 17

[Scene: Central Perk, Ross is there as Phoebe and Rachel enter wearing workout clothes after a self-defense class.]

Ross: Hi

Phoebe: Hey!

Ross: Hey, what have you guys been up to? 你们在忙什么？

Phoebe: Oh! We went to a self-defense class today! 我们今天去学防身术!

Phoebe: Now, we can kick anybody's ass! 现在我们谁都能修理

Rachel: Yeah!没错!

Ross: After one class? I don't think so. 才一堂课，不会吧?

Rachel: What? You wanna see me self-defend myself?! 你想看我们自卫吗? Go over there (points) and pretend you're a sexual predator! Go on! I dare ya!! 去假装你是性侵犯，有种就去!!

Ross: Well, of course you can defend yourself from an attack you know is coming，你当然可以抵挡已知的攻击，that's not enough.但那还不够。Look, I studying karate for a long time，我学了很久的空手道，and there's a concept you should really be familiar with. It's what the Japanese call (he holds two fingers up to his temple, and he does this every time he says this word) unagi.有个概念你一定要了解，日文叫 unagi

Rachel: Isn't that a kind of sushi?那不是一种寿司吗?

Ross: No, it's a concept!那是一种概念!

"Unagi" is a Japanese word, which means sleeve-fish. But here Ross introduces it as a word with a totally new meaning. His mock-seriousness has triggered the native audience's big laughter. Here it is transferred directly into Chinese as "unagi" rather than "manyu (eel)". This borrowing in a sense helps to reveal the bookish character of Ross who always tries to behave like a scholar among his friends.

3.4.1.2 Literal Translation

This is a kind of "word-for-word" translation. In humor translation, literal translation is the principal method, especially effective in rendering situational verbal humor. Although languages distinguish from each other in various aspects, they have a feature in common, that is, they are able to provide communicative clues for the interpretation of an utterance. Because of the similarities between Chinese language and English language and the overlaps between Chinese culture and English culture, the original language may coincide or almost correspond with the target language in the sequence of vocabulary, grammatical structure and rhetorical device. Moreover, "at least ninety percent of the fundamental structures of all languages are quite similar, and language universals far outweigh the divergences" (Eugene A. Nida, 2001:78). Literal translation which may retain both the meaning and the spirit of the original is mainly applied to translating situational humor without culture-loaded words. Look at the following example:

Season 2, Episode 3.

(Scene: Central Perk)

Chandler: Hey.

Monica: So how was Joan?琼安好不好？

Chandler: I broke up with her.跟她分手了。

Ross: Don't tell me，because of the big nostril thing?

哦，为什么?别告诉我因为鼻孔太大?

Chandler: They were huge. When she sneezed, bats flew out of them.真的超大!

她打喷嚏时会有蝙蝠飞出来。

Rachel: Come on, they were not that huge.没那么大。

Chandler: I'm tellin' you, she leaned back, I could see her brain.当她仰起头时，

我可以看见她的脑子。

Monica: How many perfectly fine women are you gonna reject over the most

superficial insignificant things?你到底要拒绝多少好女孩…只是因为非常肤

浅的事情?

Here, Chandler broke up with his girl friend again. His friends asked him why. He complained the girl's flaws in a very exaggerated way. His deliberate absurdity is funny to the audience. "They were huge. When she sneezed, bats flew out of them. " is translated as "真的超大!她打喷嚏时会有蝙蝠飞出来，" and "She leaned back, I could see her brain." is translated as"当她仰起头时，我可以看见她的脑子".These are examples of literal translations. And according to the commonness of the human aesthetic judgment, it is not difficult to understand these Chinese.

Another very important literal translation method that must be

mentioned in the Chinese subtitling of *Friends* is "literal translation with notes". For example:

Season 3 Episode 15

(Scene: A Restaurant, Monica and Phoebe are on their dates with Sergei, a Bulgarian diplomat, and Mischa, his interpreter. Phoebe and Sergei cannot directly communicate with each other due to language barrier, so every time they talk, they need the interpreter.)

Phoebe: (laughing and banging her spoon on the table) Knock, knock, knock, knock, hi. Um, could you please tell Sergei that um, I was fascinated by what Boutros Boutros Gali said in the New York Times. 嘿，嘿，嗯，请你告诉谢尔盖，我对联合国秘书长布特罗斯·布特罗斯.加利在《纽约时报》上说的话很感兴趣。

(Mischa does so.)

Phoebe: You didn't say Boutros Boutros Gali. 你没有说布特罗斯·布特罗斯·加利。

Mischa: (to Sergei) Boutros Boutros Gali. 布特罗斯。布特罗斯·加利。

(Sergei responds.)

Mischa: He says he was too. 他说他也是。

Phoebe: Interesting. 有意思。

When this episode was first broadcasted in America in1996, the former General Secretary of United Nations Boutros Boutros Gali was well known because he was forced to quit under the pressure of the U. S government, so American audience can easily recognize the identity of him. However, this episode was not marketed on DVD until 2004, which

means when the Chinese viewers watch it, they have probably forgotten who Gali is. The translator adds the title before Gali's first name. This strategy gives the Chinese audience a better understanding of the scene.

Direct translation is generally considered as the most favorable strategy of translation provided that the translation is intelligible, that is, it does not put the TL reader into unnecessary processing effort. The same is true with translating English humorous dialogs into Chinese. Although Leo Hickey insisted that exegesis is normally neither required nor appropriate in translating humor, the author still intends to believe that direct translation is very important in translating English humorous dialogs into Chinese.

3.4.2 Relevance-theoretic Indirect Translation

If verbal humor can be translated literally, literal translation is the best way. However, because of the linguistic and cultural differences, the cognitive environments of the target readers differ significantly from those of the original. Therefore, a literal translation is insufficient to represent the humorous effects. Indirect translation, as the continuum of inter-lingual interpretive use, is considered as a strategy used by the translator when the dilemma between "the need to give the receptor audience access to authentic meaning of the original, unaffected by the translator's own interpretation effort" and "the urge to communicate as clearly as possible" is solved in favor of the latter (Gutt, 2004: 177). Indirect translation, as an effective strategy, can make considerable changes in linguistic properties of the original and guarantee that the implicit information, which is retrievable by the SL reader in the original

text, will be equally available to the TL audience.

The strategy of indirect translation is considered a very feasible strategy in translating English humorous dialogs into Chinese. There are several methods to be employed in the practice of translation: annotation, adaptation and imitation. And all of them are used in the Chinese subtitling of *Friends*.

3.4.2.1 Annotation

In some cases, translators could translate the source text directly or adopt the method of annotation to illustrate cultural obstacles. Though these supplementary channels of communication have more or less lessened the humor effect, yet it is not a bad strategy for the translator to make the interpretation of direct translation easier. For instance, annotations may help the target readers to gain new information and enlarge their cognitive environments. It thereby serves to extend the context and to maximize the relevance of any information processed in the target text. Moreover, annotations are of little intrinsic relevance, but by being presented at the right time, increase the relevance of subsequent stimuli so that a greater degree of relevance is achieved with them than without them. Some verbal humor possesses heavy cultural and national features. In order to convey this extra message, annotation should be adopted. In the subtitles of *Friends,* annotation is often used. For example:

Season 3, Episode 4

(Scene: Chandler's house)

Monica: Oh wait, you know what, I got it, I got it, pretend like you just woke up, 我知道了，假装你刚睡醒 okay, that will throw her off. 这样就可以摆脱她了 Be sleepy. 睡意惺松的样子!

Rachel: Yes, and grumpy. 对，脾气暴躁的感觉

Chandler: What are you, stop naming dwarves! 你们怎么…?别数小矮人的名字(注：七个小矮人里有两个的名字是 Grumpy 和 Sleepy)

Here, Chandler just broke up with his girlfriend. He was very sad and at that time the phone rang. It must be from his girlfriend. Monica and Rachel advised him to keep dignity and pretend that nothing big deal had happened before he answered the phone call. Chandler, even in low mood, still didn't forget being humorous.

Snow White and Seven dwarves is well known in western world. And the seven dwarves are: Dopey, Grumpy, Doc, Happy, Sneezy, Sleepy, Bashful. Therefore, "sleepy and grumpy" have SCI and the conventional meaning at the same time. The source audience gets extra contextual effect that has been represented by laughter with more processing effort than direct answer. However, the Chinese viewers cannot find it humorous at all. In Hong Kong, the names are translated into:万事通 Doc 爱生气 Grumpy 磕睡虫 Sleepy 喷嚏精 Sneezy 害羞鬼 Bashful 开心果 Happy 糊涂蛋 Dopey. And in Mainland China, their names have not been translated respectively but put into: the first dwarf, the second dwarf, the third... and the seventh dwarf. The cognitive environment of the Mainland viewers is not adequate enough for them to activate the script of [dwarfs' names] and would be totally confused, not to mention the humorous effect. Their processing effort is very large but get little contextual effects,

although it is correct in its semantic translation. So it is quite necessary to add a note here in the subtitles. In addition, Rachel's speech --- "Oh wait, you know what, I got it, I got it, pretend like you just woke up, okay, that will throw her off."---has been condensed in translation due to the temporal and space constraints and the requirement for synchronicity.

Here is another example:

Season 5, Episode 17

(Scene: Central Perk, everyone is there as Rachel enters, happily.)

Rachel: Good, you guys are all here!太好了，大家都在!

Ross: Hey! What's up?怎么了？

Rachel: Well, I have a job interview at Ralph Lauren tomorrow!我明天要去拉夫罗伦面试!

All: Congratulations! Ohh, that's great!恭喜，太棒了…

Rachel: I know!我知道!

Joey: Boy, that guy's underwear sucks!那个牌子的内裤逊毙了!

Rachel: Wh-what?!什么？

Joey: I got this pair marked "XS", I gotta tell ya, there was no room for excess anything in there.我买了一条超小号的内裤(与 excess "多余的" 同音)，里面根本塞不下多余的东西。

Here, Joey's use of "XS" and "excess" is actually punning on the sound. The two words are homonyms in English. Joey mismatches the meaning of "XS" and "excess" in order to create a joke. But in Chinese, things are different, the pronunciations of "XS","超小的"and "多余的" do not sound the same. In translating this kind of humorous dialog

however, one cannot take it for granted that the target reader will have the necessary background knowledge to understand the humor successfully. If translated literally, the Chinese audience may not understand the joke and feel confused. So the note "(与 excess "多余的" 同音)" is necessary.

From the above examples, we can find that in cases when the humorous effect is produced by the linguistic features of English, it is very necessary for the translator to add annotation to direct translated humorous dialogs to compensate for the TL reader's lack of such knowledge. After all, this method will not violate the intended meaning of SL writer, and also will help TL readers to understand it well. But it should be pointed out that this method should only be applied when there is no better choice because humorous effect may be lessoned to some extend when readers stopped to read annotation.

3.4.2.2 Adaptation

In the translation of humorous dialogs, many words or phrases are always specific to a particular language and culture, and they can give rise to a communication problem. In order to avoid such a problem, the translator may need to render some implication to make TL readers understand it. Alternatively, the translator does not adhere strictly to the form or word order of the original but its communicative intention of the original author. Mona Baker thinks "this strategy involves replacing the culture-specific item or expression with a target-language item which does not have the same prepositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader" (Baker, 2000:31). Therefore, in the relevance framework of translation, the translator has to work out the true

meaning and the essence of the original and convert it properly in accordance with the characteristics of the two languages concerned in order to transfer optimal relevance to the readers. This involves changing the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exit in the target culture. The application of adaptation is illustrated in the following examples. For example:

Season2 Episode 1

(Scene: Chandler gets his hair cut by Phoebe.)

Monica:　Guys, you got your hair cut. 你把头发剪了。

Chandler: Yes, yes, I did, thanks to Vidal Buffay. 是啊，多谢维达·布菲。

Phoebe:　'Cause, you know, (in that voice) if you don't look good, we don't look good. I love that voice. 我们的光彩来自你的风采。我喜欢那个声音。

In this example, Chandler substitutes Vidal, the first name of famous hairdresser Vidal Sassoon, for Phoebe's first name, in order to praise her craft. And Phoebe answers that with a piece of advertising slogan of Sassoon (the hairdressing products named after Vidal Sassoon). The translator cleverly employs the strategy of adaption here, using the advertising slogan of Sassoon/沙宣 in Chinese market, so the audience can easily recognize the reference and have fun with the alteration.

　　Let's look at another example:

Season 2, Episode 8

(Scene: In Chandler's apartment.)

　Chandler: Ok, all right, look. Let's get logical about this, OK? We'll make a list.

Rachel and Julie, pros and cons. Oh. We'll put their names in bold, with different fonts, and I can use different colors for each column. 我们用理性来分析，好吗? 我们来列个单子。"瑞秋和茱莉，优缺点"。名字用不同字型的粗体字,然后每一栏可以用不同的颜色来写。

Ross: Can't we just use a pen? 不能够用笔就好了吗?

Chandler: No, Amish boy. 不可以，原始人。

Chandler just bought a laptop and wanted to show off. At that time, Ross was asking for help to choose from Julie--- his current girlfriend and Rachel who he loved secretly since high school. Chandler asked him to make a list about the pros and cons of these two ladies. But the way he suggested puzzled Ross. Here, "Amish" was used to laugh at Ross. Amish community is a closed community: they live an extremely simple life that listening to radio and watching television are forbidden by their religion's belief. So when radio and TV talk-show hosts want to make fun/jokes on people, they sometimes/often make on the Amish people because they are not supposed to listen to and watch. The TA knowledge resource is culture-specific. The translator here put Amish into 原始人，decreasing the processing effort of the target audience.

One more example:

Season 9, Episode 11

（Scene: At Ralph Lauren）

Rachel: Alright. Now that I'm back, why don't you just fill me in on what you've been up to?现在既然我回来了，何不告诉我你做了干什么？

Gavin: Well, I've changed your screensaver from that picture of *NSYNC.嗯，

我把你的 F4 荧幕保护程式改了。

Rachel: Hey, they were popular when I left!嘿，我离开时那可是很受欢迎的!

In this episode, when Rachel went back to work, she found that the Ralph Lauren employee Gavin, had been covering for her during her maternity leave. Showing up at the office with baby Emma in tow, Rachel immediately got the impression that Gavin was jockeying for her job on a permanent basis. To her annoyance, Gavin had changed her screensaver of NSYNC while she was away. This was just like adding fuel to the flames. In the Chinese subtitle, NSYNC is replaced by a famous star group "F4", which is very popular with the Chinese young people. We know that the two bands have many similarities: both are popular among the young people for their good looks and wonderful singing voice. *NSYNC is very familiar to the American people, but not familiar to most of the Chinese audience.

3.4.2.3 Imitation

Relevance theory claims that translation is an ostensive-inferential communication, and inference contains determining the intention from the ostension provided by communicators. Guided by this theory, the translator can make changes flexibly and conduct pragmatic adjustment. The method of "imitation" is used to meet the demand. Imitation means that the way of producing humor in source text is imitated in the translation to create similar humorous effect. It refers to cases where languages describe the same situation by different stylistic or structural means. By means of imitation, both the content and the form

can be preserved, so the translation may resemble the original in a high degree to create compatible humorous effects. This is an example:

Season 5, Episode 19

(Scene: Joey is entering, with his "grandmother", actually his biggest Italian fan, who does not understand English. Time lapse, the gang is now watching Law & Order.)

Joey: Okay, see that blind guy right there? I'm gonna bash his head in later.看到那个自人没有?我等一下会痛打他一顿。

(His grandmother asks him something.)

Joey: Oh umm, my big scene is coming up. Big scene coming up.我的主戏就快来了，主戏就快来了。

Chandler: If you said, "Big lima bean, bubbling up." Would she understand the difference?若你说"吃葡萄不吐葡萄皮"她会不会比较懂?

The TT (target text)should produce the desired response in the TT receiver. In order to enhance the impact and appeal of a text, the screenwriters employ a number of rhetorical devices to achieve the humorous effect. In the last sentence, Chandler's tongue twister "Big lima bean, bubbling up" parodies Joey's emotional words: "My big scene is coming up. Big scene coming up." Parody is written or spoken to make fun of someone. A parody is successfully translated only if the readers in the target language find it funny. So, in order to create the same comic effect in the target language, the translator transposed it into a famous Chinese tongue twister "吃葡萄不吐葡萄皮." The above example illustrates a very interesting use of the strategy of imitation.

And another example:

Season 8, Episode 4

(Scene: Monica and Chandler's, Ross and Rachel are quarreling on who sent the love signal first. The rest of the gang are listening inside quietly.)

Rachel: But you did! I mean, let's be honest.但那是真的，老实一点吧。

Ross: Yes let's.没错，老实一点吧。

Rachel: (cut in)Ross, if it helps ,I don't believe you.罗斯，希望这有帮助，我不相信你。

Ross: You know what? Uh, it's not important.那不重要。What is important is that, is that we're having a baby. And it's not---Doesn't matter who came on to who.重要的是我们要生孩了了，谁先泡"随"并不重要。

Joey: Whom.是"谁"才对。(Everyone looks at him shocked.) That's right.没错。

Here, the bookish Ross is satirized by the shallow-brained Joey for his wrong use of the second "who" in "And it's not---Doesn't matter who came on to who". In Chinese, there is no distinction between the nominative case and the objective case. For example, "shui"（"谁"）can be a subject or an object in a sentence like "shui pa shui!"（"谁怕谁"）So, here the translators have changed Ross' second "who" into"随".The two words are not equivalent in grammar, but matched as far as the humorous effect is concerned.

During the process of humor translation, the task of a translator is to make the original author's intentions and the readers' expectations meet. The translator may infer the original author's intentions from the

linguistic stimuli in the source text. Then, by comparing the cognitive environments of the source text readers and the target text readers, he makes proper alternations to ensure the reconstructed humor may entertain the readers in the target language environment.

In this part, the application of relevance-theoretic account of the translation of humor has been discussed. It should be pointed out that the choice of a particular approach to translation, such as direct or indirect translation, is not theoretically significant; both kinds of translation are based on the same principles of translation communication, and the distinction between them is purely theoretic. This implies that there is no theoretical necessity for a translator to follow either of the two approaches consistently. What he has to remember is that the translation must produce adequate contextual effects without putting the TL reader into gratuitous effort, and make the SL writer's intention and the TL reader's expectation meet.

Conclusion

This paper presents a case study of the Chinese subtitling of the famous American situation comedy *Friends*, focusing on the translation of its verbal humor. With a 10-year long broadcasting history and more than 60 million fans around the world, *Friends* is undoubtedly one of the best sitcoms ever. However, its heavily culturally-loaded and humorous subtitles definitely pose a great challenge for the translator.

Major Findings

This thesis, which investigates the process of English-Chinese translation of humor from the perspective of Relevance Theory, aims at finding out the principle and methods for humor translation. Within the framework of Relevance Theory, humor translation is a double ostensive-inferential communication process during · which the translator acts as both a communicator and a recipient. Humor translation naturally falls under the interpretive use of language, and it "should resemble the original --- only in those respects that can be expected to make it adequately relevant to the target language audience" (Gutt, 2004:107).

According to relevance translation theory, the translated text should attempt to achieve the resemblance of relevance degree between original utterances and translated subtitles, in addition to resembling to the content of the original utterances. Therefore, in subtitling, the translator should, on the basis of correct interpretation of the original humor, take into consideration the cognitive environment of the target audience and

translate the most relevant information to them within limited time and space.

Through a relevance-theoretic account of translation, the author of the thesis proposes that the translation of humorous dialogs should follow the following two principles:

(a) The translation should produce the same or similar humorous effect as in the ST without causing difficulties to the TL readers;

(b) The translation should meet the SL writer's intention of producing humor and the TL audience's expectation of enjoying humor.

The thesis applies Gutt's direct translation and indirect translation in the practice of translating humorous dialogs from English into Chinese, and explains under what circumstances what method should be used. In the translation of humorous dialogs, the responsibility of the translator is to transfer the humorous effect of the original text to the TL readers and at the mean time, to make sure that the TL readers have not much difficulty in understanding. It should be pointed out that the choice a particular translation method, such as direct translation and indirect translation which contains annotation, adaptation and imitation, is not theoretically significant; every kind of translation is processed by the same principles of translation communication, the distinction among these approaches is purely theoretic internal. Through the analysis of various examples, this thesis illustrates how desirable humorous effects can be achieved by flexible methods in consistence with the principle of relevance in diverse cognitive situations.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The subtitling of verbal humor in sitcoms is a special case of

practical translation. With a view to getting more enlightenment for verbal humor subtitling of American sitcoms, this paper has tentatively made a research in this field. Findings of the study support the efficacy of the relevance theory by showing why and how humorous dialogs are translated. However, it leaves much to be studied and clarified in the future.

Firstly, the amount of data in the thesis is limited. Owing to the finite resource, the results obtained are suggestive rather than conclusive. Thus, much more data are required to build a comprehensive body of knowledge concerning the study of translating English verbal humor.

Secondly, this thesis does not give a specific description and categorization of some humor strategies. Such a defect can be remedied in the future by researchers with more knowledge of linguistics than this author.

Thirdly, the humor translation study in the paper is an ideal one. As a social entity, translators should be influenced by histories, genders and\or ideologies. Therefore, it would be used to draw on the ideas from socio-linguistics in the future.

Finally, a lot of empirical studies are needed to attest the theoretical framework proposed here and a lot of insights from other disciplines should be sought for the theorization of subtitling humor.

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Appendix

湖南师范大学研究生科研情况登记表

姓　名		学科专业	英语语言文学
发表刊物	论文、著作题目		发表时间
湖南工业职业技术学院学报	如何在大学英语听力教学中合理运用英文歌曲赏析		2007年9月
当代教育论坛	关联理论对大学英语听力教学的启示及其运用		2008年9月

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