

An Introduction to Hatim & Mason's Contextual Dimension through the Subtitling Analysis of the Kingdom of Heaven

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Abstract: As globalization steps up, the collision and integration of different cultures are growingly apparent, with overseas movies playing an import role in the interactions of cultures. Owing to the existence of the language barriers and different cultural backgrounds, the translation of subtitling is of vital importance in the interaction of the translation, for most of the speculators are by means of subtitling to learn about the stories within the movies, and what's more, to learn about the foreign customs. However, at current stage, the research of the subtitle translation has not reached at the level of literature translation, with some protruding problems in the translation of subtitles. Therefore, how to find the practical method to improve the translation stands of subtitles serves as the emphasis of this paper. In Hatim and Mason's book, *Discourse and the Translator*, a model of context analysis is put forward. The analysis reveals that this systematic model, through distinct perspectives, provides the analysis of context in subtitling with comprehensive and logical sound bases. The adjustments made in subtitling are initiated and also governed by factors in the three dimensions of context. This paper, integrating the translation of the subtitle in the movie, *Kingdom of Heaven*, and Hatim and Mason's Contextual Dimensions, as well as combining with the features of the movie subtitle, provides a systematic explanation of the translation of subtitles.

1. Introduction

As China's economy has developed rapidly, the cultural interactions between China and Western countries are ever-growingly frequent. Western movies, functioning as a special cultural carrier, are acting as an indispensable role in these cultural interactions. As a result, the translation of the subtitling, to some extent, serves as a determinant element which may impact the success of these cultural interactions. Therefore, it is imperative that a comprehensive and effective system of translation theory be practiced into the subtitling translating. This paper applies Basil Hatim and Ian Mason's model of context in the book of *Discourse and the Translator* [1] to analyze the subtitling data collected in the movie, *Kingdom of Heaven*, so as to offer a systematic theory in dealing with the subtitling translation. This paper mainly includes five parts. The first part is marked by the

introduction, which gives an overall view of the paper. The second part is symbolized by the elaboration of subtitling. It constitutes two parts, one the classification of the subtitling and the other the features of the subtitling. The third part is represented by the elaboration of Hatim and Mason's model of context, including communicative dimensions, pragmatic dimensions and semiotic dimensions. In the fourth part, there are some case analyses, integrating the subtitling data in the movie and Hatim and Mason's theory. Finally, the conclusion will be given.

2. The Elaboration of Hatim and Mason's Contextual Dimensions

Based on the theory of discourse analysis of Halliday, Hatim and Mason integrated the study of the pragmatics and the study of semiotics into their cooperated book, *Discourse and The Translator*, which applies the analysis of the pragmatics and semiotics into the translation studies. In their book, they constructed a new analysis model of context, constituting three dimensions, namely, the communicative dimension, the pragmatic dimension and the semiotic dimension, which can be interpreted as who talks to whom, for what purposes and through which social cultural semiotics.

2.1. The Elaboration of Communication Dimension

The communicative dimension of the context underscores the communicative condition brought about in the text, for different communication condition calls for different language variation. Therefore the practical research of the communicative dimension is the studies of different language variations.

Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens recommend a framework for the description of language variation [2]. Two dimensions are recognized. One has to do with the user in a particular language event: who (or what) the speaker/writer is. User-related varieties are called dialects which, while capable of displaying differences at all levels, differ from person to person primarily in the phonic medium. The second dimension relates to the use to which a user puts language. Use-related varieties are known as registers and, unlike dialects, differ from each other primarily in language form (e.g. grammar and lexis).

2.1.1. The Use-related Dialects

Language varies in several ways due to different users. These variations include idiolectal, geographical, temporal, social, and standard/non-standard differences.

Geographical variations give rise to different geographical dialects, which are of vital importance for translators and interpreters to be aware of due to their ideological and political implications. Accent is one of the most recognizable features of geographical variation and can sometimes cause problems.

Temporal dialects reflect language change over time, with each generation having its own linguistic fashions. Although the changes are so subtle that people who are going through them cannot detect. However, if one wants to measure the extent of the diversity, reading a pre-war advertising text is very useful. For instance, when 'ghetto-blaster' and 'video nasties' emerge, the time can be identified as the 1980s. Recent coinages may also pose a translation problem if dictionaries are not advancing with the passing of time. Social differentiation is also reflected in language, with social dialects emerging in response to social stratification within a speech community. Translators must consider the full impact of social dialect, including any discursal force it may carry, in order to maintain principles of equivalence [3].

Apart from the geographical and temporal variation, language also reflects social differentiation through the emergence of social dialects within speech communities which shows social

stratification. To maintain equivalence, translators must convey the full impact of social dialect, including any discursal force it carries.

The concept of "standard" and "non-standard" dialects is based on prestige, like social dialect, rather than linguistic value judgments, and the prevalence of standards is influenced by factors such as education and the media. So it's not just a statistical problem but an intricate process. It is important to consider functional variation and its expression in language.

An individual's idiolect, or unique way of using language, is another aspect of user-related variation which can clearly elaborate the overlap between the different varieties. This includes favorite expressions, unique pronunciations, and syntactic structures. Although it is difficult to isolate and describe these idiolectal differences on the basis of one text or a single encounter, the uniqueness of an individual's speech represents an important aspect of language variation in general. In fact, idiolectal variation encompasses features from all other aspects of language variation discussed above: temporal, geographical, social, etc. This illustrates such a fact that all types of variation can be viewed as a continuum with features from different areas interacting constantly.

2.1.2 The User-related Dialects

The distinction between dialect and style in the account of language variation sheds light on the conscious stylistic choices made by language users. But what are the factors which affect this choice? Within the user-use framework developed by [2, 4], a relationship exists between a given situation and the language used in it. Register is the term employed for the kind of variety which is distinguished in this way, i.e. according to use. That means registers are defined in terms of differences in grammar, vocabulary, etc., between two samples of language activity such as a sports commentary and a church service.

Register can be divided into three main aspects: field of discourse, mode of discourse and tenor of discourse. Field, or the reference to 'what is going on' (i.e. the field of activity), is the kind of language use which reflects what Gregory and Carroll (1978) [5] call the 'the purposive role', or the social function of the text.

Mode of discourse refers to the medium of the language activity. It is the reflection of the nature of the language code being used. The basic differentiation here is that between speech and writing and the various presumptions on such a distinction.

Tenor of discourse relays the relationship between the addresser and the addressee. This may be analyzed in terms of basic distinctions such as polite-colloquial-intimate, on a scale of categories which range from formal to informal. In addition to personal tenor, which covers degrees of formality, there is a further kind of tenor, namely functional tenor which means persuading, exhorting, or disciplining.

2.2. The Elaboration of Pragmatic Dimension

The dimension of pragmatics is the study of the relationship between the language and the language context, namely the particular language in the specialized context, notably the research of how to understand and how to utilize the language in different language communication contexts. It mainly concerns about the Speech Act and translation. Austin, an Oxford philosopher, distinguished three different kinds of actions which are performed when a language user produces an utterance [6]:

- (1) Locutionary act: the action performed by uttering a well-performed, meaningful sentence.
- (2) Illocutionary act: the communicative force which accompanies the utterance, e.g. promising, warning, conceding, denying, etc.
- (3) Perlocutionary act: the effect of the utterance on the hearer/reader; i.e. the extent to which the

receiver's state of mind/knowledge/attitude is altered by the utterance in question.

2.3. The Elaboration of Semiotics Dimension

In Hatim and Mason's view, the sign is defined as a kind of material-loaded entity, which is related with some certain thought, thing, or the concept or intention of a particular matter. What is more, this material-loaded entity is on unceasingly renovation in a specific subconscious. Therefore, the sign is transformed as the sign entity, instead of a single sign. In practical pursuits, the ideal testing ground for basic semiotic notions is intertextuality. It is Julia Christeva who firstly put forward the notion of intertextuality. She considered that every single context is the constituted picture that has quoted other contexts, and every context is the absorbing and transforming of other contexts. Hatim and Mason thought that there are two kinds of intertextuality; one is the inter-intertextuality, and the other the intra-intertextuality. The inter-intertextuality means the intertextuality in different contexts while the intra-intertextuality means in the same context.

3. The Elaboration of Subtitling

3.1. The Classification of the Movie Subtitling

The definitions of the movie subtitling vary in accordance with different scholars and experts. To put it in a simple way, the movie subtitling is the dialogue at the bottom of the screen which facilitates the spectators to understand the plot of the movie [7].

The subtitles boast different names relating to the different places the subtitles are set, mainly constituting three kinds. The subtitles appearing at the beginning of the movies are called opening credits, including title of the movie, director, producer and playwright and some basic information. The subtitles appearing at the end of the movies are called end credits, covering the producer, casting, sponsors and other basic information. In general, there are some overlaps in the opening credits and the end credits. The third part is called the main titles, being the most important part of the titles and existing throughout the movie. Therefore, the translation of the main title leads the translation of other titles and credits.

On the other hand, from the perspective of linguistics, the subtitling can be divided into "intra-lingual subtitling" and "inter-lingual subtitling". In accordance with the literal meaning, the intra-lingual subtitling refers to that the languages of the subtitling and the audio materials belongs to the same nation, without involving the variation of the different languages. While the inter-lingual subtitling means that the language of the subtitling and the audio materials belong to different countries. As far as the inter-lingual subtitling is concerned, there are two divisions. One is the target language subtitles and the other covers both the source language subtitles and the target language subtitle.

3.2. The Characteristics of the Subtitling Translation

The subtitling translation is subject to the literature translation, while it also differs from the general literature translation [8]. The subtitling, varying with the movement of the advancing of the movie, is the language in the pictures. Therefore, it boasts its own characteristics.

First, the subtitling is of the time limit. In the aspect of time limit, the changing speed of the subtitling must be at the same speed of the changing of the movie frames. Only in this manner can the audience understand the movie at ease.

Second, the subtitling is of the space limit. The subtitling, as a part of the frame, should not cover much space in the screen, or the whole meaning of the every frame will be impacted, which will

impede the audience's understanding of the movies. What's more, the subtitling should be simple and clear so that the content can be expressed in the limited space.

4. The Analysis of Cases

This paper has taken the subtitling cases in the movie, *Kingdom of Heaven*, whose subtitling was translated by the bbs.HDbird.com. All the translations are cited from the movie's subtitling.

Example 1

ST: "Be brave and upright that God may love thee"

In this example, the translation fully embodies the content of the communicative dimensions, in particular the user-related varieties. In the user-related varieties boast a dialect of temporal dialect. The word "thee" is coming from the medieval time, which means you. It shows that the words change as the time flies.

Example 2

ST: "He says that is his horse."

In this example, these words were said by a man from Middle East. The accent of this man is typical of the Middle East accent, which indicates the geographical dialect in the communicative dimension.

Example 3

ST: "It has fallen to us to defend Jerusalem and we have made our preparations as well as they can be made. None of us took this city from Muslims. No Muslim, of the great army now coming against us was born when this city was lost. We fight over an offense we did not give against those who were not alive to be offended. What is Jerusalem? Your holy places lie over the Jewish temple that the Romans pulled down. The Muslim places of worship lie over yours. Which is more holy? The wall? The mosque? The sepulcher? Who has claim? No one has claim. All have claim. We defend this city not to protect these stones but the people living within these walls.

This translation is a perfect example of the other hand of the communicative dimension, namely the use-related varieties. The field of discourse is that the leading actor is giving a speech. The tenor of the discourse of these sentences means that the leading actor is persuading the masses to protect the city. While, the mode of discourse is colloquial form.

Example 4

ST: "What is your condition? I am servant to the patriarch."

He's, uh, one of my servants.

This example is an indication of the pragmatic dimension. The meaning of the Speech acts is signified by these two sentences. The locutionary act of the second sentence is that this boy is one of the servants of the patriarch. While, the illocutionary act of this sentence is that the patriarch means that he has more than one servant, which indicates that the patriarch is situating at a higher social status. The perlocutionary act of this sentence means that the patriarch wants the masses to pay respect to him.

Example 5

ST:

1) Quod sumus hoc eritis.

2) Such as we are, you will be.

In the first sentence of the ST, it is written in Latin. These letters, regarded as an entity, remind the leading actor of the meaning of these letters. This is an example of inter-intertextuality, which means that the context quotes the sign from different contexts. This example indicates the semiotics dimension in the contextual dimensions.

5. Conclusion

Zhang Meifang once pointed that “the study of discourse translation is emphasizing on issues of the relationship between the meaning and the manner of displaying, the characteristics of the discourse, context and language-choosing, as well as types of discourses and contextual environment.” [9] The contextual dimensions put forward by Basil Hatim and Ian Mason offers a platform to discuss these issues.

The transform from the colloquial form to the written form in the communicative dimension sparks some restrictions on the translation, which puts a great challenge in the transmitting of the meaning of the source targets. The translation of the subtitling not only reflects the original tenor of the source languages, but also mirrors the tenor of the communicative function.

In addition, the subtitling serves as a tool to help the audience to better understand the content of the movie, therefore, the translation of the subtitling must adjust the meaning of the source language and encode the meaning into the target language, so as to achieve the pragmatic meaning of the subtitling translation [10].

It is also imperative that the translator grasp a sound knowledge of different kinds of contexts to understand the different sign entity. Utilizing the characteristic of intertextuality, the translator may decide how to translate the subtitling and how to express the material-loaded meaning.

To sum up, the contextual dimensions, constituting communicative dimension, pragmatic dimension, and semiotic dimension, of Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, provides a determinant and comprehensive frame for the translation of the subtitling of the movie.

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