

A Study on the Characteristics and Strategies of English Subtitle Translation: A Case Study of Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons

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Keywords: English subtitles translation, "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons", cultural conveyance

Abstract: This paper takes the movie "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons" as an example to explore the characteristics and strategies of English subtitles translation. Firstly, it analyzes the common characteristics of English subtitles translation, including cultural differences conveyance, balance between colloquialism and formality, subtitle duration, and reading speed. Then, from the perspective of theoretical framework, it discusses translation strategies, including the choice between literal translation and free translation, context adaptation strategy, language style conversion strategy, and more. Subsequently, through specific case analysis in "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons", the practical application of English subtitles translation is examined, and research findings are summarized, along with recommendations for English subtitles translation strategies, providing a reference for further research.

1. Introduction

As global cultural exchange continues to deepen, movies, as an important cultural medium, play a crucial role in cross-cultural communication. In the international dissemination of films, subtitle translation, as a common form of translation, undertakes the important task of transforming the linguistic content of movies into languages familiar to the audience. Especially against the backdrop of the global popularity of English-language films, English subtitles translation becomes particularly important. However, English subtitles translation is not a simple task, but involves many complex factors. This paper takes the movie "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons" as an example to explore the characteristics and translation strategies of English subtitles translation. Firstly, we will analyze the characteristics of English subtitles translation, including conveying cultural differences, balancing colloquialism and formality, subtitle duration, and reading speed. Then, we will start from the perspective of translation theory to discuss specific strategies for English subtitles translation, including the choice between literal translation and free translation, context adaptation strategy, language style conversion strategy, etc. Through the analysis of specific cases in "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons", we will delve into the practical application of English subtitles translation and summarize some insights into translation strategies. The aim of this research is to provide theoretical references and practical guidance for improving the quality of

English subtitles translation, and also to provide new perspectives and approaches for further exploration of translation issues in cross-cultural communication[1].

2. English Subtitle Translation Characteristics

2.1. Cultural Differences and Conveyance

English subtitle translation plays a crucial role in cross-cultural communication, where cultural differences are one of the significant factors to consider. Audiences from different cultural backgrounds may have varying understandings and acceptance levels of the cultural connotations expressed in the film. Therefore, in English subtitle translation, it is essential to consider how to effectively convey the cultural information inherent in the original text to ensure that the audience can accurately understand the content and meaning of the movie. Cultural differences in subtitle translation often manifest in several aspects, such as the translation of idioms and slang. Movies often contain numerous idioms and slang, which may have different meanings and interpretations in different cultural contexts. Therefore, in the translation process, it is necessary to consider how to preserve the meaning of the original text while also ensuring understanding by the target audience. Conversion of Cultural Symbols, Movies frequently feature symbols or symbols associated with specific cultures, such as festivals, traditional customs, etc. When translating, these cultural symbols need to be transformed into symbols familiar to the target culture to ensure that the audience can understand and perceive the cultural information conveyed by the movie. Explanation of Historical Background and Social Environment: Some movies involve specific historical events or social backgrounds that are crucial for understanding the plot and character behavior of the movie. In translation, it is necessary to explain these historical backgrounds and social environments appropriately to help the audience better understand the movie content[2]. Therefore, in response to cultural differences, English subtitle translation needs to adopt corresponding strategies, including appropriate conversion of idioms and slang, reasonable explanation of cultural symbols, and appropriate explanation of historical backgrounds and social environments, to ensure that the audience can have a good viewing experience in cross-cultural communication.

2.2. Balancing Colloquialism and Formality

English subtitle translation needs to find a balance between colloquialism and formality to ensure that the translated text is both faithful to the original colloquial characteristics and maintains the normativity and accuracy of formal language. This balance is crucial for conveying the emotional intent of the original text. In practice, balancing colloquialism and formality mainly manifests in the following aspects: The original text may use a lot of colloquial expressions such as slang, catchphrases, etc. In translation, these colloquial expressions need to be converted into corresponding colloquial expressions in the target language, so that the audience can be closer to the original language style. Although colloquialism can increase the vividness and authenticity of the translation text, excessive colloquialism may make the translation text appear less formal, affecting the audience's reading experience[3]. Therefore, a certain level of formality should be maintained in the translation process to ensure that the translation text complies with linguistic norms. The choice between colloquialism and formality will affect the emotions and tone conveyed by the translation text. Appropriate colloquialism can enhance emotional expression, making it easier for the audience to resonate, while appropriate formality helps accurately convey the tone and context of the original text. When balancing colloquialism and formality, translators need to consider the specific context and target audience comprehensively to ensure that the translation text is both faithful to the original text and can be understood and accepted by the target audience. This balance is essential for

improving the quality of English subtitle translation and audience experience.

2.3. Subtitle Duration and Reading Speed

In English subtitle translation, the balance between subtitle duration and audience reading speed is crucial. The duration of subtitles should be reasonably arranged according to the audience's reading speed. Generally, the display time of each subtitle should be between 2 to 7 seconds to ensure that the audience has enough time to read the subtitle content completely. In the translation process, attention should be paid to concise language, avoiding the use of excessive modifiers and long sentences to improve reading efficiency. At the same time, to highlight important information, the display time of essential content can be appropriately extended, and subtitles' color, size, or special effects can be changed to mark them, helping the audience capture key information more quickly. Additionally, the duration of subtitles should be coordinated with the rhythm and emotional expression of the picture, avoiding inconsistencies between the picture and subtitle content to ensure that the audience can better understand the movie plot and character emotions. By reasonably controlling subtitle duration and considering the audience's reading speed, the quality of English subtitle translation can be improved, enhancing the audience's viewing experience and better achieving the dissemination and communication of movie content[4].

2.4. Interaction between Visuals and Language

In English subtitle translation, there is a close interaction between visuals and language. As a visual and auditory medium, movies convey information not only through dialogue but also through visual elements such as images, scenes, and character actions to express emotions and plot. Therefore, in English subtitle translation, translators need to consider the interaction between visuals and language, ensuring that the translated text complements the presentation of the movie's visuals to achieve a better viewing effect. Specifically, translators need to pay attention to the following aspects when translating English subtitles: The translated text should be consistent with the movie's visuals, matching not only the language expression with the characters' lip movements and emotional expressions but also the scenes and plots presented in the visuals. This ensures that the audience can better understand and accept the translated text while watching the movie. Movies often use visual elements such as character expressions, actions, and scene settings to convey emotions. The translated text needs to accurately convey these emotions, allowing the audience to understand the characters' inner world and emotional changes through subtitles. Therefore, translators need to focus on expressing emotions during the translation process, ensuring that the translated text corresponds to the emotional expression in the visuals. The rhythm of movies is often reflected through changes in visuals and the coordination of music. The translated text needs to adapt to the rhythm of the movie, allowing the audience to follow the rhythm of the visuals while reading the subtitles, maintaining a smooth and tense viewing experience. Movies may contain some details and background information in visuals that are essential for understanding the plot and character behavior. Translators need to pay attention to these details, ensuring that the translated text fully conveys all the information presented in the movie's visuals, allowing the audience to fully understand the movie's content. In summary, there is a close interaction between visuals and language in English subtitle translation. Translators need to consider this interaction to ensure that the translated text complements the movie's visuals, achieving a better viewing effect.

2.5. Translation Theory Overview

Before delving into the characteristics and strategies of English subtitle translation, it is essential

to provide an overview of translation theory, which forms the theoretical foundation for understanding and analyzing translation practices. Translation theory encompasses various approaches and methodologies that guide translators in rendering meaning from one language into another. Some key theories and concepts include:

Equivalence Theory: Equivalence theory, proposed by Eugene Nida, posits that the goal of translation is to achieve equivalence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) in terms of meaning, function, and impact on the audience. This theory recognizes different types of equivalence, including formal equivalence (faithfulness to the linguistic form of the ST) and dynamic equivalence (faithfulness to the meaning and effect of the ST).

Skopos Theory: Skopos theory, developed by Hans J. Vermeer and Reiß, emphasizes the importance of the translator's purpose (skopos) and the target audience in determining translation strategies. According to this theory, the translator's primary task is to fulfill the communicative purpose of the translation, adapting the translation strategy accordingly.

Functionalism: Functionalism, closely related to Skopos theory, emphasizes the communicative function of translation and the importance of considering the target context and audience needs. Translations are viewed as purposeful activities aimed at achieving specific communicative goals rather than mechanically transferring linguistic units from one language to another.

Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS): Descriptive Translation Studies, pioneered by scholars such as Gideon Toury, focuses on analyzing translation phenomena empirically and describing translation practices as they occur in specific cultural and historical contexts. DTS aims to uncover patterns and regularities in translation behavior rather than prescribing normative translation rules.

Cultural Translation: Cultural translation theory, influenced by theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha and Walter Benjamin, explores how translation involves not only linguistic transfer but also the negotiation of cultural meanings and identities. Cultural translation acknowledges the dynamic and complex nature of cultural interactions in the translation process.

These translation theories provide valuable insights into the principles and methods underlying translation practices, guiding translators in making informed decisions about how to convey meaning effectively across languages and cultures. By integrating these theoretical perspectives into the analysis of English subtitle translation, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and communication in the translation process.

3. Translation Strategy Theoretical Framework

3.1. Choice between Literal Translation and Free Translation

In the process of English subtitle translation, translators need to flexibly utilize strategies of literal translation and free translation based on specific contexts and cultural backgrounds. This ensures that the translated text remains faithful to the original while also aligning with the language habits and cultural cognition of the target audience.

Literal translation aims to preserve the original language structure and expression as much as possible without significant alteration. It helps maintain the authenticity of the original text, allowing the audience to perceive the language characteristics and emotional expression of the characters in the movie. However, literal translation may lead to cultural barriers and comprehension difficulties, especially when dealing with specific cultural backgrounds or language habits.

Free translation, on the other hand, involves appropriate conversion and adjustment based on retaining the meaning of the original text while considering the target language and cultural background. The purpose of free translation is to ensure that the translated text is more in line with the understanding habits and cultural backgrounds of the target audience, enabling smoother comprehension of the movie's content. However, excessive free translation may result in the loss or distortion of original information. Therefore, careful consideration is needed when choosing free translation strategies.

In practical terms, translators need

to flexibly apply strategies of literal translation and free translation based on the linguistic characteristics, context, and audience's understanding level of the original text. For texts with significant cultural differences or awkward language forms, moderate use of free translation strategies may be appropriate to ensure that the translated text is more easily understood and accepted. For texts with clear and concise language and context, priority may be given to literal translation strategies to preserve the original language style and expression as much as possible. In conclusion, the choice between literal translation and free translation depends on a variety of factors. Translators need to flexibly apply these strategies based on specific situations to ensure the accuracy and fluency of the translated text in both language and culture[5].

3.2. Contextual Adaptation Strategy

The contextual adaptation strategy is crucial in English subtitle translation, involving how to choose appropriate translation methods in different contexts to ensure that the translated text achieves a similar effect to the original text in the target language environment. In the contextual adaptation strategy, several aspects are particularly critical, including consideration of cultural background. Translators need to fully consider the cultural background of the original text and the cultural awareness of the target audience in order to choose appropriate translation methods. In cases involving specific cultural backgrounds or habits, moderate free translation or cultural explanation may be necessary to ensure that the translated text is accurately understood and accepted by the audience. Matching of context and tone is important. The tone and emotional expression of the translated text should consistently match the original context. When translating, it's essential to consider the tone and emotions expressed in the original text, selecting appropriate translation methods and words to ensure that the translated text accurately conveys the original emotions and tone. The balance between colloquialism and formality is crucial. Translators should flexibly employ colloquial and formal strategies based on the language style of the original text and the language habits of the audience. This ensures that the translated text aligns with both the original language characteristics and the audience's preferences and level of acceptance. Characterization of personality traits, When translating dialogues and lines of characters, individual personality traits and speaking styles of each character need to be considered, choosing suitable language expressions. By personalizing the translation of character lines, character images can be better portrayed, enhancing audience immersion and emotional resonance. In summary, the contextual adaptation strategy involves multiple considerations and trade-offs. During the translation process, careful consideration of the original context and the audience's cultural background is essential. Translators need to flexibly apply different translation methods and strategies to ensure that the translated text achieves the best dissemination effect in the target language environment[6].

3.3. Language Style Transformation Strategy

The language style transformation strategy plays a crucial role in English subtitle translation. When dealing with the language style of the original text, translators need to flexibly apply different transformation strategies based on the language habits and cultural background of the target audience to ensure that the translated text resonates with the audience. Firstly, the transformation between formal and colloquial language is a critical task. Translators can moderately transform formal language expressions used in the original text into colloquial forms, making the translated text more in line with the audience's daily language usage habits, thus increasing readability and affinity. Secondly, considering the cultural background and language habits of different regional audiences, translators need to consider regional cultural characteristics when transforming language styles. For texts with strong regional characteristics, corresponding cultural explanations or adjustments may be required to ensure the popularity and acceptability of the translated text in the

target language environment. Furthermore, personalized language style transformation for character roles is essential when translating dialogues and lines of characters. By skillfully adjusting the language style of character roles, not only can character images be better shaped, but audience immersion and emotional resonance can also be enhanced. Finally, conveying emotional nuances is also an important goal of language style transformation. In addition to adjusting language forms, translators also need to accurately grasp the emotions and tones implied in the original text, conveying them to the audience through appropriate language expressions and vocabulary choices, allowing them to experience similar emotional experiences. In conclusion, the language style transformation strategy is of great significance in English subtitle translation. By appropriately adjusting the language style of the original text, translators can better meet the language needs and emotional expectations of the audience, thus improving the quality and viewing effect of the translated text.

3.4. Colloquialism and Formalization Strategy

The strategy of colloquialism and formalization plays a crucial role in English subtitle translation, involving how to choose the appropriate language style based on the content of the original text and the language habits of the target audience to ensure that the translated text aligns with the audience's daily life and language usage scenarios. Colloquialism strategy includes the following aspects: Firstly, colloquialism helps enhance the authenticity and readability of the translated text. By using colloquial language expressions, the translated text is more likely to resonate with the audience, enabling them to better understand and accept the plot and dialogue content in the movie. Secondly, colloquialism can increase the vividness and emotional expression of the translated text. The colloquial language style is closer to the communication style in people's daily lives, making it easier to convey the emotions and tones implied in the original text, enhancing audience emotional resonance. Additionally, colloquialism also helps highlight the personality traits and social backgrounds of character roles. Different character roles may have different language habits and speaking styles. Through moderate colloquial treatment, character images can be better shaped, enhancing audience immersion and emotional experience. Corresponding to colloquialism is the strategy of formalization, which emphasizes maintaining the normativity and accuracy of the translated text, avoiding excessive use of slang and colloquial language to ensure that the translated text complies with linguistic standards and cultural norms. When choosing colloquialism and formalization strategies, translators need to consider the content of the original text and the language background of the target audience comprehensively [7]. Generally, in dialogue scenes, especially in scenes depicting character emotions and interactions, moderate colloquialism strategy can enhance the emotional expression and authenticity of the translated text, while formalization strategy is more suitable for describing formal occasions or specific professional fields. In conclusion, the colloquialism and formalization strategies in English subtitle translation need to be flexibly applied to ensure that the translated text aligns with the language style of the original text while also fitting the language habits and acceptance level of the audience, thus enhancing the overall viewing experience.

4. Case Analysis: English Subtitle Translation in "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons"

4.1. Segment Selection and Analysis

In "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons," the dialogues between Tang Sanzang and Sun Wukong are often filled with wisdom and humor. Below is an analysis of a classic dialogue, with the segment selected as follows:

Original: 'Tang Seng: So being a demon is like being a human being. You have to have a kind

heart. With a kind heart, you are no longer a demon.’

Dialogue Analysis:

In this dialogue segment, Tang Sanzang expresses his understanding of being a monster. He believes that if a monster possesses a kind heart, it ceases to be a complete monster but becomes something between human and monster, known as a "monster-human." This statement not only reflects profound thoughts on the essence of monsters but also demonstrates Tang Sanzang's tolerance and inclusiveness towards the world. For this dialogue, English subtitle translation may adopt the following strategies: Retaining the original meaning: Translators should strive to retain the wisdom and humor implied in the original text, ensuring that the translated text accurately conveys Tang Sanzang's thoughts.

Concise language expression: To ensure the translated text is easy to understand, translators may opt for concise language expression, avoiding excessive modifiers and complex sentence structures.

Maintaining language fluency: During translation, efforts should be made to maintain language fluency, enabling the audience to read the subtitles smoothly and comprehend Tang Sanzang's viewpoint.

Based on the above analysis, the English subtitle translation of this dialogue segment may be as follows:

English Subtitle Translation: Tang Sanzang: So, being a monster is just like being a human. One must have a kind heart. With kindness, one ceases to be a monster, but becomes a "monster-human."

Through the analysis of this dialogue segment, we can see how English subtitle translation strategies are applied to retain the original meaning, concise language expression, and language fluency, thereby effectively conveying the wisdom and humor of the original text.

4.2. Translation Issues and Solutions

When translating the above segment, several issues may arise, along with potential solutions: Cultural differences: The concept of "monster-human" mentioned in the original text is unique to Chinese culture and may not be directly translatable into English, as there is no equivalent concept in Western culture. Solution: Translators can opt to use a concept similar but more easily understood by English-speaking audiences. For example, it can be translated as "half-human, half-monster" or "human-like monster" to better convey the original meaning. Humor expression: The phrase "being a monster is just like being a human" in the original text employs humor through wordplay, which may not be easily expressed in English, leading to the loss of humor. Solution: During translation, translators can try using humorous expressions commonly used in English or slang to retain the original humorous effect. Emotional conveyance: Tang Sanzang expresses a sentiment of tolerance and understanding in the original text, which needs to be preserved in translation to allow the audience to perceive Tang Sanzang's thoughts. Solution: In translation, emphasis should be placed on the lyrical and emotional expression of language, selecting appropriate words and expressions to convey Tang Sanzang's understanding and tolerance, enabling the audience to understand and feel Tang Sanzang's emotions. By implementing the above solutions, potential translation issues can be effectively addressed during the translation process, ensuring that the translated text accurately and fluently conveys the original meaning and emotions, thereby enhancing the audience's viewing experience[8].

4.3. Application of Translation Strategies

In translating segments, the flexible application of translation strategies is crucial. For parts involving cultural differences, humor expression, and emotional conveyance, translators need to flexibly choose appropriate strategies based on specific circumstances. While retaining the original meaning, the adaptation strategy can be used to overcome cultural differences, ensuring that the translated text is more in line with the understanding habits of English-speaking audiences.

Additionally, the strategy of literal translation can maintain the original language style and structure, making the translated text more faithful to the original intent. Moreover, the flexible use of synonyms and maintaining language fluency are also key to ensuring translation quality. Most importantly, when selecting translation strategies, attention should be paid to maintaining character images to accurately convey the relationships and emotions between characters. Through the comprehensive application of these strategies, potential issues encountered during the translation process can be effectively addressed, ensuring the accuracy and fluency of the translated text, thereby enhancing the audience's understanding and appreciation of the film.

5. Conclusion

After studying the characteristics and strategies of English subtitle translation in "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons," the following conclusions can be drawn: The importance of English subtitle translation in films cannot be underestimated, as it directly affects the audience's understanding and appreciation of the film's content. Taking "Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons" as an example, this paper provides an in-depth analysis of English subtitle translation from aspects such as cultural differences and communication, balance between colloquialism and formalization, subtitle duration, and reading speed. The research found that during the translation process, translators need to consider factors such as the original text's emotions and meanings, the language habits and cultural background of the target audience, as well as the film's pace and viewing experience, flexibly applying various translation strategies to ensure the accuracy, fluency, and authenticity of the translated text. Additionally, this paper also delves into segment selection, translation issues and solutions, and the application of translation strategies. Through the analysis of specific cases, it demonstrates potential translation issues and effective methods to solve these problems, providing valuable insights for the practice of English subtitle translation. In conclusion, English subtitle translation is a complex and essential task that requires translators to possess good language skills, cultural awareness, and creativity. It is hoped that this research can provide reference for scholars and practitioners in related fields and offer inspiration and guidance for English film translation work. With the development of society and cultural exchange, research and practice in English subtitle translation will continue to progress and improve, making greater contributions to the dissemination and exchange of film culture.

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