

Zhang Xinyue

*Master's Degree Candidate, School of Foreign Languages
Harbin Engineering University, Harbin, China*

**APPLICATION OF CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN SUBTITLE
TRANSLATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY: A
CASE STUDY OF “LIGHTING UP THE STARS”**

In the context of globalization, film and television subtitle translation shoulders the dual mission of breaking cultural cognitive barriers and realizing value resonance. This study takes the phenomenal-level funeral film “Lighting up the Stars” as the research object, and discusses the specific application of culture-loaded words in subtitle translation from the perspective of Skopos theory.

Taking the unique funeral culture of China as its theme, “Lighting up the Stars” breaks people’s inherent cognition of death and funeral through the narrative technique of interweaving sorrow and joy. As words that carry specific cultural information and colors, culture-loaded words are the key and difficult points in subtitle translation. Starting from Skopos theory, this paper analyzes how translators choose translation strategies according to the three principles of Skopos Theory by deconstructing the English subtitles of culture-loaded words in films, so as to ensure the coherence of subtitles and be faithful to the cultural connotation and artistic style of the original text.

Keywords: *Skopos Theory, culture-loaded words, subtitles, English translation, text analysis, Lighting Up the Stars.*

1. Introduction

With the significant improvement of China's international status and influence, "Chinese culture fever" continues to heat up in the world, and as an important part of culture, more and more film and television works go abroad and go to the world. As one of the media to spread culture, film's subtitle translation is particularly important. Subtitle translation involves not only language conversion, but also cultural transmission. The film "Lighting Up the Stars" tells a touching story between Mo Sanmei and Wu Xiaowen, a special father and daughter who are mixed in the funeral industry with plain and simple lenses. The film was well received not only at home, but also abroad, showing in 29 cities in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. However, many culture-loaded words in film subtitles have always been a major difficulty in translation, because the culture-loaded words reflect the unique activities of a certain nation, which are gradually accumulated in the long historical process and are different from other nations, and thus involve many aspects such as the changes of times, history and culture, cross-cultural communication and translation strategies. Therefore, from the perspective of Skopos Theory, this paper attempts to study the translation strategies chosen by translators for culture-loaded words in "Lighting Up the Stars", and find out the differences between Chinese and English subtitles, reflecting the practical significance of Skopos Theory in the translation process.

2. Skopos Theory

In the 1970s, Katharina Reiss proposed the concept of Skopos Theory. On the basis of it, Hans J. Vermeer put forward that "translation is an act of satisfying the needs of readers in the context of the target language in order to achieve a certain purpose in the context of the target language". The highest service target of translation is the target language readers, so the choice of translation methods should be based on the purpose of translation activities. Based on the views of the first two scholars, Christiane Nord further explains the principle of fidelity: "Fidelity is not fidelity to the original text in the traditional sense, but the interpersonal relationship

between several people involved in the translation activity”.

Skopos Theory includes three perspectives: Skopos perspective, coherence perspective and fidelity perspective. The Skopos perspective is the first principle, coherence perspective and fidelity perspective must follow the Skopos perspective. The Skopos perspective requires the translator to convey accurate information of the source language to the target language reader and ensure that the translation produces meaning in the context of the target language. The coherence perspective requires intralingual coherence. The translated text should be coherent not only in expression and logic, but also in the cultural background of the target reader, so as to achieve effective communication. The fidelity perspective emphasizes that translators should ensure the interlingual coherence between the original text and the target text as much as possible, respect the style of the original text and preserve the characteristics of the original text. However, the fidelity of the translation is not absolute; it will be affected by other factors.

The three perspectives of Skopos Theory provide guidelines for translators to handle subtitle translation, especially for the translation of culture-loaded words. First of all, while fully considering the needs of target language readers, translators should clarify their translation objectives, that is, translators should adopt appropriate translation strategies to enable film subtitles to break through the cultural and linguistic restrictions between the source language and the target language, so as to convey the meaning of the film to the audience, so that they can better enjoy the excellent films of different countries and languages, promoting cross-cultural communication and enhancing the commercial influence of the film. Secondly, the translator should be faithful to the original content and make appropriate adjustments to the translation without damaging the connotation of the original, so that the translation can meet the grammatical structure of the target language and the needs of the audience while retaining the unique culture of the source language. Finally, the translation should be coherent, concise and clear, so that the audience can understand the content of the translation.

3. Text Analysis Based on the Three Perspectives of Skopos Theory

3.1 Skopos Perspective

3.1.1 Literal Translation from Skopos Perspective

Example 1: 粒粒皆辛苦。

Translation: Every grain is the fruit of hard work.

The original is that Mo Sanmei educated Xiaowen not to eat the food on the table, Xiaowen said like this. This is a well-known ancient poem, from the Tang Dynasty Li Shen's "Two pieces of compassion for farmers", referring to every grain of rice is the farmer's hard work, exhorting people to cherish food. Here, the translator retains the sentence structure in Chinese, while adding "the fruit of" to clarify the logical relationship.

Example 2: 这个林子大了，什么鸟都有。

Translation: There are all kinds of birds in a forest.

The original is that an old man looked for Mo Sanmei to help him do a ridiculous living funeral, Mo Sanmei's friends advised caution, Mo Sanmei said so. This is a Chinese proverb, which means that when the forest grows, there will be all kinds of birds in it, which means that in a complex environment, what kind of people there are. The meaning of this sentence is relatively simple, even if the translator adopts a literal translation, the foreign audience can basically understand. Therefore, based on this, the translator chooses to preserve the cultural implication of the original as much as possible.

3.1.2 Free Translation from Skopos Perspective

Example 3: 你们几个嘴上的裤腰带松了是吧。

Translation: I see that your mouths are running loose.

The original meaning of “裤腰带” in Example 3 is “the belt that ties pants around the waist”, and many related idioms are well known and often used by the

Chinese people, such as “head tucked in the trouser belt” means “risking one’s life to do something”. The word “裤腰带” with a strong Wuhan dialect color, this line in the film appeared in a funeral, the hero Mo Sanmei was framed for stealing the old woman’s gold ring, the crowd of onlookers said, he faced the discussion when the blunt counterattack, creating an unrestrained, reckless, but also with some rufous character image. When translating Example 3, the translator used free translation, “*your mouths are running loose*” means “*said what should not be said*”, without directly translating “*belt*”, avoiding the understanding barrier caused by the culture-loaded words.

Example 4: 日子让你过成浆糊了。

Translation: You make the days go by like tasteless porridge.

The word “浆糊” in the “Modern Chinese Dictionary” means “paste made of flour or starch and water, with a certain viscosity, mostly used for paper, cloth or articles to bond, also known as “paste”. The original line uses metaphorical techniques here to compare life to paste, meaning that life has no passion and no hope, and people muddle through. This line in the film is the phrase Mo Sanmei’s father said to him that he muddled through every day. Although the son inherits the father’s business, Mo Sanmei was not firm, just wanted to get the property “up to heaven” (the funeral shop’s name in the film) in exchange for money.

As a noun, paste corresponds to “浆糊” in Chinese, but it has no metaphorical meaning corresponding to “muddled life”. Therefore, paste can hardly convey the meaning intended by the original language to foreign audiences, which will hinder the audience’s understanding of the film. The translator undertook free translation, very cleverly translated “paste” into tasteless porridge, in order to preserve the Chinese metaphorical meaning.

Example 5: 清一色一条龙

Translation: Same color, three sequences.

There is a scene in the movie where Xiao Wen likes to play mahjong and is so

good at cards that she wins three adults. “清一色一条龙” is a Chinese term for mahjong, which means that the cards in the hand are of the same suit and contain three lines. In order to avoid cultural misunderstandings, the translator did not use literal translation to render “龙” into “long” here, but combined Chinese culture and translated it into “Same color, three sequences” so that foreign audiences could understand the meaning.

3.2 Coherence Perspective

3.2.1 Additional Translation from Coherence Perspective

Example 11:你下巴上是长了个洞吗?

Translation: Do you have a hole in your jaw where food leaks out?

The original text is that Xiao Wen devoured in the meal, Mo Sanmei educated her, the child's mouth was small and ate urgently, food fell out from her mouth. This is a very vivid and life-like sentence, many Chinese children have heard this sentence from their parents when they were young, if only translated literally, foreign viewers may think that the child was injured and has a big hole in his jaw, which completely deviates from the meaning of the original. The translator retained this saying with Chinese characteristics by “have a hole in your jaw”, and added an attributive clause “where food leaks out” to explain it, which helps the audience understand it accurately.

Example 12: 她硬了。

Translation: Her body's gotten stiff.

After the death of Wu Xiaowen's grandmother, Mo Sanmei and others provided funeral services. In Example 12, “她硬了” refers to Xiaowen's grandmother's stiff body, which Mo Sanmei needs to soften. If the translator does not combine the context in the translation, it is easy to mistranslate. At the same time, the translator should take into account that the target audience is foreigners, who cannot understand the literal translation of this sentence. In view of this, according to the funeral atmosphere of the film, the translator used the translation strategy of

adding words to translate the original text into “Her body’s gotten stiff”, which shows the dynamic nature of translation, and also allows foreign audiences to understand the meaning of the original text.

3.2.2 Reduced Translation from from Coherence Perspective

Example 14: 小文，藕炖排骨我已经给你做好了。

Translation: Xiaowen, I made you lotus roots with pork ribs. It’s ready to eat.

Example 15: 给你买你最喜欢吃的红糖糍粑

Translation: We’ll get your favorite glutinous rice cake in brown sugar.

The Chinese food in the film adopted the translation strategy of main ingredients, and the cooking method of “stewing” was not translated, so that foreign audiences can clearly understand the main ingredients of the dish.

3.3 Fidelity Perspective

3.3.1 Transliteration from Fidelity Perspective

Example 16: 你们家要改改门风啊，总做这个殡葬行业，风水不好。

Transliteration: You need to change your ways, always dealing with the dead, it’s bad for fengshui.

The English audience does not understand the implied meaning of the word “门风” here. According to the contextual information and the fidelity perspective of Skopos Theory, the translator translated “改改门风” into “change your ways”, which can be understood as “change your profession”. The neighbor persuaded Mo Sanmei to stop engaging in such an “unlucky” industry and let Mo Sanmei partner join him to open a wedding supplies store.

Example 17: 三哥送你上天堂不如三哥送你入洞房。

Translation: San, it’s better to send people to wedding beds than heaven.

The “wedding night” in the poem “Four joys of life” is listed as the “four great joys of life”, and the old saying “would rather tear down ten temples than destroy a marriage” is enough to show the importance of marriage in China. Based on the

interpretation of traditional culture, the translator broke the cultural barrier between bilingualism and translated “洞房” into wedding beds, so that English audience can have a deeper understanding of the wedding night, one of the “four great joys of life”.

4. Conclusion

Culture is an important symbol that distinguishes a nation from other nations, and it is the mission and responsibility of translators to better spread the excellent culture of their own nation. Excellent translation can promote the dissemination of excellent traditional Chinese culture and enable more people around the world to have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. From the three perspectives of Skopos Theory, this paper analyzes the translation strategies of culture-loaded words in subtitle translation of the film “Lighting Up The Stars”. It is found that translators mainly adopt five translation strategies: literal translation, free translation, additional translation, reduced translation and transliteration, among which free translation is the most frequently used, which highlights the difficulty of translating culture-loaded words.

REFERENCES

1. 陈小慰, (2000). 翻译功能理论的启示 – 对某些翻译方法的新思考. *中国翻译*, (5).
2. 郭建忠, (1998). 翻译中的文化因素: 归化与异化. *外国语*, (2).
3. 霍瑛, (2015). 《舌尖上的中国》字幕翻译实践研究报告. 西安: 西北大学, 1-84.
4. 李道新, (2005). *中国电影文化史*. 北京: 北京大学出版社.
5. 李和庆, (2005). 规范与电影字幕翻译. *中国科技翻译*.
6. 李运兴, (2001). 字幕翻译的策略. *中国翻译*, (4).
7. 钱绍昌, (2000). 影视翻译 – 翻译园地中愈来愈重要的领域. *中国翻译*.
8. 谭载喜, (1991). *西方翻译简史*. 北京: 商务印书馆.
9. 谢天振, (2009). *中西翻译简史*. 外语教学与研究出版社.
10. 张春柏, (1998). 影视翻译初探. *中国翻译*, (2).
11. 张清宏, (2009). 翻译目的论与影视字幕翻译. *西安欧亚学院学报*, (1).
12. 张锦兰, (2004). 目的论与翻译方法. *中国科技翻译*, (2).
13. 朱小晶, (2008). 浅析互联网美剧字幕翻译. *长江学术*, (4).

张欣悦

硕士研究生，哈尔滨工程大学外国语学院，哈尔滨，中国

目的论视角下文化负载词在字幕翻译中的应用——以《人生大事》为例

在全球化语境下，影视字幕翻译肩负着破解文化认知壁垒、实现价值共鸣的双重使命。本研究以现象级殡葬题材电影《人生大事》为研究对象，探讨目的论视角下文化负载词在字幕翻译中的具体应用。《人生大事》以中国独特的丧葬文化为题材，通过悲喜交织的叙事手法打破了人们对死亡和殡葬的固有认知。文化负载词作为承载特定文化信息和色彩的词汇，是字幕翻译中的重点和难点。本文从目的论出发，通过解构影片中的文化负载词的英文字幕，深入剖析译者如何依据目的论的三原则进行翻译策略的选择，以确保字幕的连贯性，同时忠实于原文的文化内涵和艺术风格。

关键词：目的论， 文化负载词， 字幕翻译， 文本分析，《人生大事》