

Strategic Analysis of Film and Television Subtitle Translation under the Influence of Commercial Ideology: Translation in *Legally Blonde* and *Silk*

Peiting Zhang

School of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou, Zhejiang 310018, China

Abstract: As a special form of translation, film and television subtitle translation enables the cultural elements to be well disseminated across cultures and displayed to audiences in different countries. As the trend goes further, film and television entertainment is being more industrialized and commercialized. This paper takes the subtitle translation of the *Legally Blonde* and *Silk* as the research object and aims to link the commercial ideology with the subtitle translation of film and television with the help of Functional Equivalence theory. Furthermore, to propose translation strategies under this trend to achieve better interaction between works and audiences.

Keywords: Film and Television Subtitle Translation, Functional Equivalence Theory, Commercial Ideology, *Legally Blonde*, *Silk*

1. Introduction

In the context of economic globalization, the process of cultural globalization is also accelerating. Film and television works are the important media of cross-cultural communication. In the process of creating film and television works, the themes, character images, and subtitle translations of them can effectively reflect the cultural connotations of languages and cultural backgrounds. Among them, subtitle translation is the medium that effectively links the work to the audience.

From its inception, film and television works have carried an important mission to meet the needs of the popular culture. While enriching the cultural life of modern society, film and television works have also created huge commercial income. Therefore, they are not only a cultural work but also a cultural product. They cannot be separated from the control and influence of the market economy and commercial environment. So film and television works also have their business and nature attributes.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 The theory and advantages of Functional Equivalence theory

Nida's translation thoughts can be divided into three main strategies of development: descriptive linguistics, communication theory and social semantics.

This theory provides effective translation methods and strategies for film and television subtitle translation. Its operability and advantages are reflected in the fact that the focus of this theory is consistent with the goal of film and television subtitle translation. Functional equivalence theory regards subtitle translation as a way of communication, which closely links source language with target language audience (Zhang, 2002).

2.2 The influence of ideology and commercial ideology

The French philosopher Aldousé using Marxist Ideological theory to analyze ideological theory which pointed out that because different types of ideologies have differences in breadth and depth of their influence on society or different fields, ideologies are usually divided into mainstream and non-mainstream ideologies. With the increasing influence of the market economy and economic globalization on cultural works and even industries, business ideology has gradually become the mainstream ideology.

2.2.1 On cultural industry

The cultural industry ideology in the business ideology has a huge impact on the cultural industry policy, and even directly affects the policy tendency. Furthermore, the mainstream of ideology plays a key role in cultural dissemination, which can shape and change people's value. The ideology of cultural industry will not only affect the ideological concepts of the people, but also affect the allocation of cultural resources. This is because the optimal allocation of resources is carried out according to the expression of values and the needs of social competition.

2.2.2 On film and television cultural works

The scenes and fragments presented in film and television works are usually derived from our daily lives. Centering on specific themes, cultural works convey value orientation to the audience with the help of the portrayal and narration of specific characters and events and shape ideas with positive rendering or side setting. As Peng Li (2021) has pointed out: "The guiding function of cultural works is realized by criticizing wrong ideas and propagating mainstream ideology."

Also, the ideology of film and television literature is closely changing with the times. Under the influence of pursuing box office, the proportion of commercial films and TV dramas gradually increases. As the enterprise system of film production becomes more and more mature, quite a number of producers and investors aim to make stereotypical films catering to the tastes of the public in a low-cost and short-cycle way, so as to obtain commercial benefits. More producers and investors are jumping on the bandwagon. Commercial TV dramas are

largely similar to commercial films.

3. Case study of Subtitle Translation in *Legally Blonde* and *Silk*

3.1 Syntax dimension

(1)

Lines: Does this court endorse that? Her punishment and that of her young family is lifelong. And I submit to this court, with all your emotion and intellectual intelligence, that is cruel, it is unusual... and it must stop.

Subtitle translation: 法庭想任其发生吗? 这样的惩罚将伴随她和她年轻的家人度过一生。我想请求法庭, 从所有法理人情的角度去考量, 这样的惩罚实在太残忍, 太反常... 这必须停止。

In Chinese, “endorse” means “(公开)赞同, 支持, 认可”. This whole quote comes from courtroom argument. It is translated into “任其发展” to better emphasize the lasting influence of a guilty verdict. It plays a communicative function and reflects the equivalence of the word meaning. Combining with the situation, the combination of sensibility and rationality can be highlighted.

On the basis of bilingual equivalence of vocabulary and syntax, Chinese subtitle translation presents concise and accurate features like short phrase “法理人情”. To some extent, this fits in with contemporary people’s habit of increasingly “fragmented” access to information. In the limited viewing time of fewer than two hours, it seems that the main purposes are to let the domestic audience quickly grasp the so-called laughter point and suddenly capture the wonderful moments of the film, so as to achieve the entertainment purpose.

3.2 Style and cultural dimension

(2)

Lines: Life and death in the Caribbean. Survive more than five years and your death sentence gets commuted to life imprisonment.

Subtitle translation: 加勒比海的无期式死刑。五年之后, 死刑就改为终身监禁。

The translation of this paragraph fully respects stylistic and cultural equivalence. First of all, the translations like “终身监禁” are highly professional. Secondly, there are differences in legal systems between China and Britain. The translation here does not directly use the term “无期徒刑”, which is applied in the judicial field of China, but respects the original meaning of British case law.

Chinese subtitle translation also carries the effect of style and emotional transmission. For domestic audiences, Chinese subtitles have become especially indispensable. First of all, criminal cases are far from the lives of viewers. Secondly, *Silk* also has a significant feature that it involves a lot of impassioned trial and defense segments. The lawyer’s lines are very infectious, which can be called the most brilliant part of the whole play, so it also needs Chinese translation to correspond.

This is also in line with the underlying commercial ideology of boosting attendance or viewership with more culturally appropriate translations. When the audiences are surprised to find that the seemingly obscure English lines were cleverly translated into Chinese, cultural self-confidence spontaneously emerged. In turn, this kind of cultural confidence will strongly and continuously stimulate the audience, which will directly increase the number of views or box office.

4. Viable Translation Strategies

Follows are the corresponding strategies which are particularly adapted to business ideologies.

4.1 Adaptive adjustment and application of emotion

Subtitle translation is the way to make people communicate with film and it is the film affective means of expression. The first *Legally Blonde* only took two months to shoot and cost \$18 million to make. After that, the second film followed, which was released in July 2003. Under the influence of commercial ideology, Chinese subtitles should not only pay full attention to lexical, textual and stylistic equivalence, but also play the following roles to ensure that overseas TV dramas gain sustained and high ratings in China and gain profits in the market of copyright and IP.

From the perspective of human emotional communication, cross-cultural communication is a complete emotional cycle. The two sides of cultural exchange can perceive a certain emotion shared by human beings in different culture background through certain media, or share and communicate the subjective cognition of the commonality of symbols in different cultures. Different from rational thinking and reflection, such impact and waves will be generated at the moment when the audience watches the TV series and browses the subtitles and will continue to have an impact. We can say this kind of influence is deep, longer and even lifelong. Those true, simple, and peaceful feelings are the ones that can most move people’s hearts.

4.2 Adaptive adjustment and application of creation

From the perspective of directors, producers and investors, it is necessary to make the works meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the broadest masses. Under the influence of commercial ideology, it seems that high box office, high ratings and high revenue have become the only criteria for measuring the success of film and television works. But this is not the whole story.

Secondly, from the translators’ points of view, they should fully understand the content of translation which includes the plot of the film and TV works, the character image that the work wants to create and the values conveyed.

From the perspective of Nida, the meaning is the most important and the form is the second. So the translators can make some creative transformation. After the film and television works have an emotional resonance with the audience, affected by their own cultural and cultural exchanges, Chinese subtitles need to be further transformed connotations. This is carried out on the basis of respect for cultural

pluralism. However, even the Chinese translation of subtitles can present an overall picture of visualization, emotion and etc.,and even the translator opts to use network hot words to add a sense of humor and interest to make subtitles come alive, the most important core criteria for translator is still faithfulness.

Conclusion

With the globalization of culture and the further expansion of the market for film and television cultural works, commercial ideologies aimed at breaking into the global film market, catering to the aesthetics of more audiences, obtaining high box office and high returns are “manipulating” the development of today’s film and television works.

Commercial ideology taken into consideration and make some creative transformation, the translated text could truly become a bridge linking the source language and the target language audience.

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