Research on the Subtitle Translation under the Guidance of Eco-Translation Theory

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Abstract: In recent years, TED talks have become widely known for their short, concise length and diverse content, covering a wide range of fields including science, business, design, education and more. When we watch a TED talk video, we listen carefully and associate it with our own deep thoughts. This process makes us feel like we are participating in an unforgettable event, having an inspiring conversation with the big names on the TED stage and having a unique discussion with people from all over the world. After watching many videos of TED talks, I found that for different areas of talk topics, the translator tries to capture the cultural context as well as the deeper meaning of the talk content using different approaches. Second, in the translation work, when the translator faces the contradiction and conflict between different dimensions (dimensions here refer to linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions in three-dimensional translation theory), the translator first weighs the pros and cons and then makes a compromise to ensure the integrity of the subtitles. Finally, the translator also incorporates Chinese cultural elements into the translation process, such as the use of idioms, proverbs and colloquial terms, which are simple, clear and easy to understand, and which are conducive to the Chinese audience's understanding of the speaker's intended meaning[1]. This paper analyzes the "adaptation" and "choice" made by translators to language and culture in translation based on the three-dimensional conversion theory in the ecological translation theory of Mr. Hu Gengshen, and provides a different theoretical idea for subtitle translation, hoping to improve the quality of subtitle translation to a certain extent. I also hope to improve the quality of subtitle translation to a certain extent.

1. Introduction

In Interpretation of Ecological Translation Studies, Mr.Hu Gengshen first proposed that ecological translation is a holistic study of translation that uses ecological rationality and from an ecological perspective, there are nine major research focuses and theoretical perspectives of ecological translation. A famous author Wu Jing in The Exertion of Translator's Subjectivity-Adaptation and Selection studies the adaptation and selection in ecological translation theory, from the three-dimensions, that is language, cultural and communication indicating the translator's subjectivity. The article Subtitle Translation Strategies written by Li Yunxing, holds the method that can be practiced in subtitle translation.

TED is a nonprofit organization in America, devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of

short, powerful talks, about 18 minutes or less. Nowadays, TED Talk videos have been widely circulated among English learners, and even serve as an important way for people to understand foreign countries. Therefore, it is very important to accurately understand what the speaker wants to express. If the translator has a slight deviation when subtitling, it will mislead the audience. However in China, from middle school students to college students, they regard watching TED talks as one of the ways to learn English. Therefore with its extensive lecture topics and difficulties, TED talks have set off a wave, so we should pay more attention to TED subtitle translation, improving its accuracy and getting more professional skills[2]. Therefore, it is very important to accurately understand what the speaker wants to express. This paper, supported by Hu Gengshen's ecological translation theory, studies the subtitle translation of TED talks, which is an innovation and of great significance in the field of translation.

Three-dimension conversion is analyzed the practical application in TED subtitle translation, which is not only beneficial to the subtitle translator in the translation in getting a more professional point of view, but also the audience can well understand the speaker's meaning in watching it.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the definition and the origin of ecological translation, including the background of this theory and introducing the nine main theories of ecological translation theory. The second part elaborates classification and methods of subtitles translation. The third part specifically introduces the main content of TED talks, analyzing the subtitle translation in TED talks based on three-dimensional transformation theory. The flexible conversion of language in subtitle translation is demonstrated in detail.

2. Ecological Translation Theory

2.1. Background Information of the Ecological Translation Theory

In the field of ecological translation, it has become Hu Gengshen's special knowledge to see and explore the theory of translation in an ecological way. Ecology has become both the main concept of Hu's translation thinking and the core concept of ecological translation system.

Also at the beginning of the developing in ecological translation, Hu Gengshen provides a clear direction for ecological translation: "With ecological holism as a perspective, Chinese ecological wisdom as a foundation, and the principle of 'natural selection' as a cornerstone, ecological translation is an interdisciplinary approach to explore ecological translation, textual ecology, and 'translation community' ecology, and their interactions and interrelationships." (Hu 16)

There are two stages of the development of ecological translation. The emergence of ecological translation has a background of broad social development. Since the 1960s, the world began to pay attention to the ecological environment problems. Since then they have proposed relevant policies and measures of environmental protection. The emergence of ecological translation coincides with the academic development and also a natural consequence. In 1987, at the United Nations environment and development committee environment conference, the experts issued "the Future of human beings" (Our Common Future) of the keynote speech. In this speech, experts referred to the long-neglected "ecological" dimension, which is not a pristine research fields, because it is also the concrete embodiment of social development. The second stage is that the emergence of ecological translation studies coincides with the direction of academic development, which is the inevitable result of the transformation of modern thought and philosophy. Ecological translation shows more and more obvious coherent integration in the overall advancement of translation theory research. It takes ecology as the basis and premise of translation theoretical research, establishes an effective fit between ecological thinking and translation activities, and provides an ecologically oriented holistic approach to translation activities through an ecologically oriented holistic approach. Its unique ecological paradigm and ecological structure endow translation activities with a holistic research

vision, which makes it more distinctive than traditional translation studies and provides a theoretical construction in the field of modern translation studies.

Almost twenty years have passed since 2001 when Mr. Hu Gengshen written the first article on ecological translation in China, entitled "A Preliminary Study on the Theory of Translation Adaptation Selection". In this article, Mr. Hu particularly emphasized the various "adaptations" and "choices" made by translators during the translation process, which provided the relevant theoretical basis for the later proposed adaptation and selection theory and laid the foundation for further research. During this decade, translation scholars published relevant books and articles, making the theory of translation ecology more refined and scientific. At several international and domestic conferences, translation scholars from all over the world have gathered, and foreign scholars have affirmed the pioneering spirit and development of Chinese ecological translation science. So far, through the dedicated research of domestic and foreign scholars, more than 10 research projects on ecological translation theory have been approved; the International Ecological Translation Society and its working group have been established, which is called Journal of Eco.

2.2. Related Theories of Ecological Translation Theory

There are nine theories in ecological translation theory, including ecological paradigm, relevance sequence chain, ecological rationality, translating to do something, translation ecological environment, translator center, adaptation/choice, punishment after the fact, "three-dimension" conversion[3]. In general, these theories have two perspectives: the translation perspective and the translator perspective. The theory of relevance sequence chain is more important. It refers to the important link between ecological translation and nature. The diagram below illustrates the relationship described in the chart above.

The ecological rationality is focusing on the ecological aesthetics. We can explain the theory of translating to do something in this way: for translators, there are many reasons to engage in translation work, either to earn a living, to improve the connotation of life, or to experience the diverse cultures of the world. The translator center is actually a more general theory that is in line with the ideas and insights of translators in the actual work of translation. The next one is adaptation and choice. The theory of adaptation and selection in translation, guided by the doctrine of "natural selection" in Darwin's theory of evolution, views all translation as a naturally occurring ecological environment and examines the adaptation and selection of the translator in the translation process.

The last theory is "Three-dimension" conversion, also is the most important one in this paper. This theory is the central in this essay. Ecological translation uses a "multi-dimension" approach to translate things, and this approach is the main element. Three-dimension translation is guided by adaptation and choice, referring to linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. As we all know, translation is the mutual exchange between two languages, so it will certainly involve two different histories and cultures, two different ways of thinking and expressing, and the ultimate goal of translation is to communicate with people. If the translated text is incomprehensible, it will be a total failure of translation work. Therefore, it requires the translator to translate in "Three-dimension".

Specifically, when translating a text, the translator should analyze the text exhaustively, then divide the connotation of meaning from one paragraph to one sentence, and take the "three-dimension" into account[4]. The conversion of the linguistic dimension requires translators to pay attention to the linguistic forms of both languages, including the choice of vocabulary, syntax, and discourse; the cultural dimension means focusing on conveying the cultural connotations of both languages and avoiding misinterpretation of the source language from the cultural perspective of the translated language; implementing the communicative dimension requires translators to focus on the communicative intent of both languages[5].

In the almost two decades of creation and development, its theoretical and applied research has become more than abundant. Comparing and analyzing these academic results, we can see that the research on ecological translation mainly focuses on the practical operation level of "three-dimension" conversion.

3. Subtitle Translation

3.1. Classifications of Subtitle Translation

There are two types of subtitles, one is intralingual subtitle and the other is interlingual subtitle [6]. Intralingual subtitle involves only language without any real translation action occurring between two different languages. It is just concerned with transcribing what are said. Interlingual subtitling is the translation from the source language into the target language, not modifying the original sound of the film or television but translating it into another languages directly, and the text is presented at the bottom of the screen. This process is commonly called subtitle translation. More precisely, the translation of subtitles has three aspects: first is interlingual information translation, second is simplification or reduction of speech and the third is conversion from spoken language to written language. The last two meanings are different from other types of translation. Although in other types of translated texts, additions or subtractions can also be found, it is rare that the original sentences are altered as drastically as in the subtitles translation, or even their original meaning is directly simplified, without word-for-word translation. While in the most common translation and interpretation jobs, one language is translated into another language in the same form, whether in a written or an oral form, in subtitle translation, it is a cross translation from spoken to written text. Therefore it is more difficult. We need to take deep consideration when we are in the work of subtitle translation.

3.2. Methods of Subtitle Translation

Subtitle translation is always adopting the way of deduction. Therefore, it is also called the deductive form of translation or constrained translation[7]. There are three forms in generic translation, including condensation, reduction and deletion. We can simply understand that condensation requires the translator to translate the central idea of the original text into concise sentences, the simpler the better, so that the reader can quickly grasp the central idea. Because the subtitle translation happens instantaneously, it requires the translator to use as many phrases as possible in the translation to reduce the reading load on the audience and make it easier for them. Reductive paraphrasing requires the translator to translate according to the original expression and structure, so as not to cause ambiguity among readers. Deletion is well understood, which means the translator needs to remove unnecessary content, such as intonation words like "ha ha", because the audience only needs to listen to it and to understand it. The method of deletion may seem simple, but it should follow its principles, and only by doing this can translators be more proficient in subtitle translation. This principle is called relevance[8]. There are two specifics of the relevance: first the individual's cognitive structure is composed of logic, vocabulary, and various encyclopedic knowledge; second, all speeches have a relevant context, so translators should translate subtitles according to the specific context. Due to time and space constraints, the translator can boldly remove information that is not relevant to cognitive activities in order to highlight more important content. Another unique point of subtitle translation is that the subtitle translation may be influenced by images or music in movies and television, so the translator need appropriately reduce the translation according to the context to avoid redundancy[9].

4. Three-Dimension Conversion in TED Talks

4.1. TED Talks

4.1.1. Introduction and Influence of TED Talks

TED is a non-profit organization dedicated to the dissemination of ideas, usually in the form of short and powerful speeches. Founded in 1984 as a conference for experts in technology, entertainment and design, it now covers almost every topic from science to business to global issues. TED videos have been translated into over one hundred languages. TED is also a global community that welcomes people from different regions and cultures who seek a more varieties understanding of the world. They passionately believe in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and even the world [10].

In fact, everything the founders of TED organization do, from their Conferences to their TED Talks to the projects sparked by The Audacious Project, from the global TED and TED Translators communities to the TED-Ed (TED Education) lesson series, is driven by this goal: How can they best spread great ideas?

TED talks offer the opportunities to broaden people's horizons because TED talks cover a wide range of topics, including the latest international news, the newest technology innovation, science and cultures, business, health, lifestyles, nature and the environment, etc. Unlike traditional lectures, which are usually complex and long, TED lectures are more than informative, short and snappy, so we can clearly understand it. In TED Talks, each speaker makes the best use of his or her time, which is usually less than 18 minutes. In China, most contemporaries, especially the younger generation, live at a relatively fast pace and have less free time, which does not allow them to recharge their batteries effectively. TED Talks can fulfill people's leisure and knowledge needs, as they allow people to obtain information in a short period of time and in a relatively intuitive way. In addition, this method of obtaining information matches the preferences of Internet users, especially those people who spend most of their free time watching videos rather than reading. This is also the reason why TED talks are warmly welcomed by the Chinese public.

4.1.2. The Selected TED Speakers and the Main Content of the Talks

The first selected TED Talk is Love, no matter what. The writer is Andrew Solomon. If you were a "special" (in physical, behavior and physical appearance) child, how would your parents treat you? Would they correct you and mold you to be like other children, or would they respect your preferences and encourage you to be the unique? In this speech, Andrew Solomon shared his experiences with the audience, from his own story to the stories of others, and with tears in his eyes, he shared what it's like to be a "special" person. He exhorted those parents with "special" children to treat their children kindly.

The second selected TED Talk is Three kinds of bias that shape your worldview. What shapes our perceptions or misconceptions about science? Climatologist J. Marshall Shepherd explains how to confirm the inherent way of thinking that can be called bias, and what shapes our bias. He referred three ways to expand your radius of understanding of science. And he shared his experience on how you can replace these biases with something more powerful. That is knowledge.

The third selected TED Talk is Dangerous times call for dangerous women. The speaker Pat Mitchell, has nothing left to prove and much less to lose --- she' s become a "dangerous woman". To be a "dangerous" person is not to be a person who frightens others, she says, but be a fearless woman when faced with the gender discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence, and having the force to be reckoned with the woman's rights. In this powerful call to action, Mitchell invites all

women, and allies to join her in embracing the risks to create a world where safety, respect and truth burn brighter than the darkness of our current times.

Next selected TED Talk is why our screens make us less happy? What are our screens and devices doing to us? Psychologist Adam Alter studies how much time screens steal from us and how they' re getting away with it. He shares why all those hours you spend staring at your smartphone, tablet or computer might be making you miserable. He also give a far better strategy by giving an example that is we might do certain things every day like eating dinner however in different places, but we must adopt a rule that is never use phone at the table. And the speaker tells us that when we get used to these strategies, our life becomes more colorful, richer and interesting.

The last selected one is what really matters at the end of life? At the end of our lives, what do we most wish for? For many of us, it's simply comfort, respect and love. The speaker BJ Miller is a hospice and palliative medicine doctor who thinks deeply about how to create a dignified, graceful end of life for his patients. When we take the time to savor this moving talk, which asks big questions about how we think on death and honor life. The speaker tells us that we can regard the road to death as a liberation, then you can always find a shock of beauty or meaning in life you have left. If we love such moments ferociously, and then maybe we can learn to live well, but not in spite of death, but because of it.

4.2. Three-dimension Conversion in TED Talks

After watching many TED talk videos, I believe that their subtitles are largely coincide with The principles of the three-dimension conversion of ecological translation theory. The following examples are intended to show how the principles of three-dimension conversion are applied in the translation.

4.2.1. Linguistic Dimension Conversion

Example 1:
And I thought to myself, they're six feet tall, he's three feet tall.
Two beers for them is four beers for him.
She said,"I knew I couldn't go in there and interrupt him, but I went home, and I left him eight messages on his cell phone."
The speech described a male college student who was born with dwarfism. Most people took it for granted that he was an introverted and conservative, even autistic person, but he was able to grow up with happiness under his mother's education, never felt different from others. He also learned to drive a car. His mother bought one for him. The clip above showed that one day, his mother saw his car in front of a bar. At this time, the speaker narrated the incident by saying that "Two beers for them is four beers for him". which was unintelligible and confusing to the audience.   In this translation the translator accurately conveyed the meaning of the original text and made the audience understand that it indicated the male college student was short. The word "his" in the sentence was translated, in line with the lexical shift in the linguistic dimension conversion, which translated the pronoun into a noun phrase.
Example 2:
"But I think if we lost everyone with Down syndrome, it would be a catastrophic loss."
And Karen said to me, "I'm with Tom. For David, I would cure it in an instant to give him an easier life. But speaking for myself--well, I would never have believed 23 years ago when he was born that I could come to such a point."
This paragraph was about the birth of a child with Down's syndrome named David to Mr. and Mrs. Karen, who did not get the education he deserved, so they decided to set up a small educational institution, which developed into the Cook Center years later, where thousands of mentally

handicapped children receive education. The underlined part should be translated , but in this context, it would be illogical to do so. In his own case, it was his son with Down syndrome that made him an outstanding person in the field of educating children with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, translating it was important and logical in terms of language dimensional shift. The word "with" in the sentence was translated , which reflected the lexical shift of the linguistic dimension conversion, translating the preposition into a verb.

Example 3:

People engage with the life they have and they don't want to be cured or changed or eliminated.

They want to be whoever it is that they've come to be.

The man who gave this TED talk was called Andrew Solomon. He was a gay. In these two quotes I have chosen, he represented people who were born different, whether they were different in the outside or different from others on the inside, He believed that they wanted to be whoever it was that they've come to be, and that others should not force them to change. The four-character idiom is "simple and concise in terms of content, neat and proportional in terms of form, and smooth and pleasant in terms of rhyme". This translation was in line with the Chinese language habit, and the conversion was as natural and authentic as the original Chinese sentence, which was a linguistic dimension transformation made by the translator.

Example 4

That space is incredibly important to us.

That's the space where we do things that make us individuals.

Here the speaker suggested that each person had about five or six personal hours a day, called it personal time, and this period of time was crucial for us. That's where hobbies happened, where we had close relationships, where we really thought about our lives, where we zoomed back and tried to work out whether our lives had been meaningful.

4.2.2. Cultural Dimension Conversion

Example 1

My son, he's 10, he believes in the tooth fairy.

And he needs to get over that, because I'm losing dollars, fast.

In the author's example of how different people had different perceptions, he talked about his son and mentions the Tooth Fairy as a proper noun, but viewers who may not had heard the story don't know what it actually meant, so the translator added a parenthesis after the term, in order to explained the story about the Tooth Fairy. Translating in this way presented the audience with a complete cluster of meanings that conveyed the cultural terms mentioned by the narrator.

Example 2

So let's begin at the end.

This phrase appeared at the point when the speaker finished the opening part and moved to the second part. The translator used the common Chinese phrase to indicate the author's turn of speech, which was in line with the common logic of the Chinese language and was beneficial for the Chinese audience to understand.

Example 3

At the end of the call, the journalist threw in a question that seemed like a sort of softball.

Collins Dictionary gave an explanation of "softball": something that can be easily dealt with. The most common meaning of "softball" was ball, and in United States, "a sort of softball" means "a less difficult problem". Few Chinese viewers knew this meaning, so if translated directly, it obviously didn't make sense; the translator translated it directly according to the meaning of foreign customary expressions, Here the translator made an adaptive choice of conversion of cultural dimensions, choosing words and sentences according to the cultural environment of Chinese, which not only

expressed the essence of the original text, but also gave the Chinese audience the same experience as the original language audience.

Example 4

We just recently had Groundhog Day, right?

The speaker of this footage wanted to show that many people had inherent prejudice in their thinking. In terms of weather prediction, many people preferred to believe in the traditional saying that the groundhog could predict the weather, rather than believe in the weather predicted by modern technological means. If the translator didn't additionally explain the cultural connotation of this holiday, Chinese people won't be able to understand the meaning, so the translator had well explained Groundhog Day, which was not only conducive to the audience's understanding, but also in line with the connotation of cultural dimension.

Example 5

We are spending three times longer on the apps that don't make us happy.

One of the reasons we spend so much time on these apps that make us unhappy is they rob us of stopping cues.

The speaker showed the survey he did. The data showed that those applications that made us unhappy occupy more of our time, when saying the reasons he mentioned "stopping cue". According to the usual understanding, we would translate it, Later the speaker explained the meaning of "stopping cues" by giving examples: in the past, when finishing reading a book, we would close the book to do the next thing; when a show on TV was over, we would have to waiting for a week until the next one came.

4.2.3. Communicative Dimension Conversion

Example 1

Friends, we are living in dangerous times.

And such times call for all of us to be more dangerous.

The word "dangerous" here didn't mean real danger, so the translator enclosed dangerous in double quotation marks to indicate to the audience that the word had a double meaning. On the one hand, she believed that being dangerous means to be more fearless, to speak the truth when it was safer to remain silent, and to support the right views of those who were not present; On the other hand, becoming more "dangerous" also meant accepting any possible risk and creating a world where women felt safe wherever they were.

Example 2

Because healthcare was designed with diseases, not people, at its center.

Which is to say, of course, it was badly designed.

In the previous article, the speaker talked about, like someone in the medical profession, he had inadvertently become a scapegoat for a flawed health care system, and many doctors also had the same feelings. The reason for this was explained in the quote, namely because healthcare was disease-centered, not designed in human-centered, so it was "badly designed".Here it is highly consistent with the communicative dimension. The translator had adapted the translation to the communication habits for better understanding by the audience.

Example 3

After my limbs were gone, that lose, for example, become fact, fixed,necessarily part of my life......

If you have seen this video you would see that the speaker's legs was wearing a pair of prosthetics. Therefore, after the speaker said:" After my limbs were gone", the translator translated "gone" . This is not only clear but also in line with daily communication habits, which can be said to have reached the highest stage of "Faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance" mentioned , that is, "elegance".

Example 4

It wasn't surprising when he came into clinic one day, saying he wanted to raft down the Colorado River.

With all the risks to his safety and his health, some would say no.

Many did, but he went for it, while he still could.

The translation of this phrase reflected the communicative dimension. Simply by looking at the word "could", we couldn't know what it meant. The writer said that the man who wanted to go rafting on the Colorado River was a man with prostate cancer and AIDS, and his bones would be painful and fatigue, that's the reason why people didn't want him to go. So "while he still could" which might cause the ambiguity in understanding.

5. Conclusion

Based on the three-dimension conversion in the ecological translation theory proposed , this paper illustrates the practical application of the three-dimension conversion by taking the subtitle translation in TED talks as examples.

English and Chinese belong to two different language families with different characteristics. Translators must make choices in the translation process to maintain the coordination and balance of the two languages in terms of vocabulary, syntax, discourse, culture and communication habits[11]. The examples of subtitle translation from TED talks in the paper show the successful conversion of language, culture and communication from English to Chinese.

Subtitle translation requires the expression of sufficient and concise information. It should match the identity, action and reproduction of the characters; on the other hand, it should take into account the cultural ideology, artistic taste and cultural level of the audience. In short, subtitle translation should fully consider the ecological environment, and finally achieve the best adaptation of the dimensions of linguistic, cultural and communicative in a limited time and space, so as to provide the audience with the most relevant information effectively.

Guided by the three-dimension conversion of ecological translation, the subtitle translation of TED talks will be more dependable at the operational level.

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