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Chinese Translation of English Film Titles Guided by Relevance Theory

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Abstract: As a form of artistic expression, film is loved by the public. Film title, as a precise summary of the film content, plays a significant role in expressing the film theme. In the context of great differences between Chinese and western cultures, the translation of English film titles is undoubtedly faced with many difficulties, such as language differences, cultural conflicts and deficiencies, misunderstanding of the audience and so on. This paper studies the E-C translation of film titles from the perspective of relevance theory, to discuss how to reflect the functions of film titles precisely on the premise of considering the audience's response. This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part is the introduction, which will introduce the research background, research significance and research methods. The second is a review of the research situation of the Chinese translation of English film titles. The third part is the main part. This chapter will point out the needs of English film title translation by analyzing a large number of examples of film title translation. The fourth part is a summary of how to choose translation strategies and techniques in the translation of English film titles into Chinese, and how to use relevance theory to make the Chinese translation of film titles meet the needs of the audience.

Keywords: Relevance theory, Film title, Translate into Chinese.

1. Brief Introduction

1.1. Research Background

The title of a film is like the sign and advertisement of a film.It can not only reveal the plot of the film, but also stimulate the imagination and desire of the audience.A good film title will have an impact on people's artistic senses.In today's Internet era, the early publicity of films usually makes the films fire before they are released.As the first impression to the audience, the film title plays a direct role in the quality and market feedback of the films. Therefore, a successful film title can make the audience recognize and like the film and "escort" the film.At present, foreign films are very popular with Chinese people, so the translation of film titles is very important.In fact, the translation of foreign film titles plays a role of cultural media. The translation of film titles and the transmission of their connotations are difficult problems for every translator.Therefore, this problem has attracted the attention of many researchers.They studied from different perspectives such as business needs, traditional culture, language structure, etc., and discussed how to make the film title conform to the expression habits of Chinese people, and ensure that foreign culture and Chinese culture can find a seamless way of cooperation without departing from the original central content and ideas of English films.

1.2. The Significance of the Study

In this context,this paper studies the English-Chinese translation of film titles from the perspective of relevance. Firstly, it analyzes the characteristics of English film titles in detail,and summarizes the aspects that should be adapted in English-Chinese translation of film titles.Then,according to relevance theory,some specific translation methods are proposed to provide practical guidance for translators.

Therefore,on the basis of relevance theory, this paper discusses the strategies and methods of translating English film titles into Chinese, taking a large number of English film titles as examples, hoping to give some enlightenment to translators when translating English film titles.At the same time,the research of this topic will clarify the requirements of English film title translation for translators and the factors that should be considered in the process of film title translation that affect the translator's choice of translation strategies,so as to make the translated works cater to the audience's social psychology, aesthetic emotion and cultural orientation as well as their acceptance,and help Chinese audiences understand the story connotation of foreign films.

1.3. Research Method

Starting with a hypothesis that relevance theory can be used to guide the translation of film titles, this paper analyzes the language features, naming channels and general functions of film titles; Through the analysis of Relevance Translation Theory, this paper expounds the feasibility of Relevance Theory to guide film title translation from a theoretical perspective. Finally, through the case study of applying relevance theory to film title translation, it provides a new perspective for the practice of film title translation, and advances relevance translation theory to the specific application field of film title translation, and explains the strong explanatory power of relevance theory in the field of film title translation. From the perspective of relevance theory, film titles also have context, contextual effects and corresponding communicative intentions. Film title translation is a special form of "ostensive-inferential" communication mode. Like any other form of "ostensive-inferential" communication mode, it also requires the "reproduction" of its original communication intention through the use of context and contextual effects in translation; At the same time, the psychological expectations of the target language audience should be met with full consideration of the cognitive context of the potential target language audience. By demonstrating the feasibility of relevance theory to guide the translation of film titles and analyzing the language features, naming channels and general functions of film titles,

this paper finally concludes the channels for achieving the best relevance of film title translation through example analysis as follows: reappearing the communicative intention of the original title, realizing or guiding the psychological expectations of the target audience, translating the language aesthetics of the film title and the commercial functions of the film title.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Study abroad

Relevance theory was first proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) in Relevance: Communication and Cognition. It includes cognitive principles and communicative principles. Among them, the cognitive principle means that human cognition is often consistent with the maximum relevance (Sperber,Wilson1986:158; 1995: 260), "recognition" is the visual intuition, "knowledge" is the expression effect after understanding, and the maximum relevance is that the listener obtains the maximum contextual effect with the minimum effort. The cognitive principle guides the translation relevance between the target text and the original text in translation, so that the audience can obtain the relevant information of the original text through the target text and achieve the maximum contextual effect.

2.2. Study at Home

The relevant research of relevance theory includes: analyzing the current situation and specific translation methods of the names of various things from the perspective of contextual effects (Hou Wenting 2018; Shi Xiaoya 2009); From the perspective of ostensive inference, this paper studies the translation characteristics, precautions and translation methods related to various labels (Han Xiaolan 2013); Combining the relevance translation theory with the cognitive view of metaphor, this paper discusses the processing strategies of couplet translation (Zhao Jianhui 2018).Many scholars have studied film title translation from different perspectives, and some studies have exemplified and analyzed film titles from a psychological perspective (Yang Mifen 2009); Some studies have studied the approaches and methods of film title translation guidance from an ethical perspective (Li Ting 2016); Other studies explore various appeals and cultural factors in film title translation from the perspective of adaptation (Zheng Hui, Liao Jing 2009).

3. A Study of Film Title Translation Based on Cognitive Principles

3.1. Cognitive Consistency

Cognitive consistency requires that the content, language style and cultural characteristics of the English translation of the film title be the same as those of the original film title, so that the audience's direct visual reaction and cognitive reasoning process obtained from the English translation of the film title are consistent with the original film title. Some film titles are translated with the same pronunciation, which is similar to the original film titles, or directly in the form of Chinese pinyin. Most of the original titles of such films are names of people or places.

The film《生活秀》is translated into English as "Life Show". The film tells the inspirational story of the heroine Lai Shuangyang who lives alone. She not only needs to earn money to support herself and her brother in the drug treatment center, but also takes care of her nephew who is left unattended. In the face of a series of problems such as others robbing the house and the appearance of suitors, she firmly supports her life. Based on the cognitive principle, we believe that the title "Life Show" intuitively conveys the content of the film, shows the tragic life of the heroine in a dramatic way, and is close to reality. This translation can make the audience clear at a glance and produce the maximum contextual effect.

The title of the film《暖》is translated as "Nuan". The film is about a couple of rural men and women who met when they were young and fell into memories when they met again in middle age. The title of the film is translated directly in the form of Chinese pinyin. "Warm" is the name of the heroine in the film, and it is also the emotional tone that the film conveys to the audience, the beautiful feelings of youth and the release of this feeling after many years. The English translation of "Nuan" gives the audience a suitable context, which is not different from the original title in terms of vision and understanding.

3.2. Visual Consistency, Understanding Difference

Distinguishing, knowing and combining means that from the visual point of view, the words and expressions of the translated title and the original title will be quite different, but it is translated according to the theme, keynote and type positioning of the film and the original title, so there is convergence in understanding, that is, different audiences will have the same understanding of different film titles, achieving the effect of recognizing, knowing and combining.

In order to pursue cognitive consistency, if the film《开国大典》is translated into "Founding Ceremony of PRC", foreign audiences may focus on the celebration, which is a series of stories about the birth of New China before the founding ceremony. Therefore, the title of the film is translated into "The Birth of New China" to achieve the effect of recognition, knowledge and cooperation, help foreign audiences understand the key points of the film and obtain the correct information of the film type. This follows the maximum contextual effect of cognitive principles and translates the context in the context of Chinese culture

The content that foreign audiences can understand has better expression effect.

The film《横空出世》is translated into English as "Roaring Across the Horizon". This film is about the story of General Feng Shi and scientist Lu Guangda who led a group of outstanding talents to the northwest desert to complete the construction of the atomic bomb base and the atomic bomb launch after the War of Resistance against the United States and Aid the Korean War. "Roaring" means “吼叫咆哮”. The name of the English translation literally means “吼叫着穿过地平线”, which can be understood as being born in a loud noise. On the one hand, it refers to the loud noise of the atomic bomb launch; On the other hand, it also refers to the various hardships experienced by many scientists in building the atomic bomb base, which succeeded after overcoming many setbacks. Its title expresses the meaning of the birth of new things. With the same theme, the English translation of the title gives the audience a more shocking contextual effect.

3.3. Cognitive Change

Cognitive change is a slight modification (cognitive supplement, cognitive reduction, cognitive replacement,

cognitive elaboration) on the basis of the original film title, so as to obtain better expression effect, adapt to foreign culture, create the maximum contextual effect, make foreign audiences easy to understand, and more attract the interest of foreign audiences.

The film《茉莉花开》tells the tragic love and fate of three generations of women in a family. The “茉”, “莉”and “花” in the Chinese film title are the names of the three generations of women in the film. “茉莉花开” also gives a sad and moving feeling, symbolizes the image of women, and conforms to the public taste and aesthetic taste of the Chinese people. But in the English translation"Women", the information transmission is more direct, without too much implicit information, which is suitable for the thinking habits of foreigners, and is conducive to the understanding of foreign audiences.

There is no connection between the film《电影偷着乐》and the English translation of "A TREE IN HOUSE". The film tells the happy story of the leading actor Zhang Damin with his wife and children living together with his two brothers, two sisters and old mother. The Chinese title clearly refers to Zhang Damin's happy life, while the English title is more obscure. The "tree" in "A TREE IN HOUSE" can not only refer to the walls and boards used to separate the living space when the four generations of the Zhang family live together, but also symbolize the process of the brothers and sisters of the Zhang family finding happiness one after another and the Zhang family spreading branches and leaves. Cognitive replacement has designed more attractive titles for different audiences, which are more in line with the scope of understanding of the audience.

The film《孙中山》is not directly translated into "Sun Yat-sen", but "DR.SUN YAT-SEN". It is because from the perspective of cognitive principles, Chinese audiences are very familiar with Sun Yat-sen and no longer need to create a clearer context, while foreign audiences may not have a high understanding of Chinese historical figures. Therefore, with DR., it shows the respect of Chinese people for Mr. Sun Yat-sen to foreign audiences, It reflects the importance that China attaches to revolutionaries.

4. Film Title Translation Strategies

Film title translation is a communicative activity and should follow the principle of optimal relevance. The best relevance between the intention of the original text and the understanding of the target readers is the highest level of translation activities and the goal that the translator strives to achieve.In the process of film title translation, the translator should have good judgment, accurately judge the intention of the film creator expressed through the film, and try to convey this intention to the target audience.Relevance theory has a strong explanatory power for film title translation. Therefore, the author puts forward several translation strategies under the guidance of relevance theory

4.1. Transliteration

Transliteration is a form of translation based on the pronunciation of the source language. Transliteration reflects the phonetic correlation between the target language and the source language. The method of transliteration is relatively easy to operate, retains the source language pronunciation, and expands the cognitive context of the target language audience. Generally, films named after people or places can be transliterated. For example, Casablanca《卡萨布兰卡》, Godzilla《哥斯拉》, Avatar《阿凡达》, Peter Pan《彼得·潘》, Harry Potter《哈利·波特》, etc.

Literal translation is the most common translation method in film title translation. Literal translation is generally based on the relevance between the meaning of the translation and the original title.

4.2. Literal Translation

The meaning of many film titles can reveal the content of the film, and the implied meaning coincides with the cognitive context of the target audience. Then, the translator can adopt the literal translation method. As long as the meaning of the source language is expressed to the maximum extent, the best relevance can be found. For example: Captain American《美国队长》, The Age of Innocence《纯真年代》, Roman Holiday《罗马假日》, Edward Scissorhands《剪刀手爱德华》, Edward Scissorhands, etc. Literal translation can also expand the cognitive context of the target audience. For example, Brokeback Mountain《断背山》 is a typical literal translation. The film tells the love story between two men. Therefore, the expression “断背山” has become a fixed term for gay men in the Chinese context.

4.3. Free Translation

Free translation refers to changing the form of the original film title in order to let the audience understand the film content when there is a contradiction between the film content and the expression form of the translation.

Due to the differences in language and culture, the rhetoric or cultural images contained in some film titles are not easy for the target readers. At this time, it is necessary for the translator to exert his literary grace and try to find a movie translation that can resonate with the target audience, so as to improve the acceptance of the movie. For example, the movie Waterloo Bridge, translated as "《魂断蓝桥》", and the cognitive context of Chinese people, let people know at a glance that it is a tragic love story. Waterloo refers to failure in the cognitive context of Chinese people. If it is translated into 《滑铁卢桥》, it will cause misunderstanding. Other classic free translation titles include Fringe's 《危机边缘》, Die Hard's 《虎胆龙威》,French kiss's 《情定巴黎》.

4.4. Supplementary Translation

Complementary translation means to reflect the film content in the film title translation on the basis of literal translation or free translation, so as to make it more consistent with the cognitive context of the target audience, and achieve the maximum relevance between the translated title and the film story content. For example, if the movie Life of Pi is translated literally into《派的一生》 , it may be confusing, but the translation of《少年派的奇幻漂流》successfully links the story content to let the audience think before watching the movie. There are many other excellent translated names, such as Sister Act,《修女也疯狂》, Rio《里约大冒险》, The Notebook《恋恋笔记本》, Ghost《人鬼情未了》, and so on.

5. Conclusion

Film title translation can be regarded as the re-creation of the original title translation. A successful title can let the audience understand the relevant information of the film, attract the attention of the audience, and play a role in

attracting the film. After watching the film, the audience recalled the title of the film and felt meaningful. They were deeply impressed by the title of the film, so that word of mouth made the film obtain higher box office. This requires translators to choose different translation effects for different film styles, cultural backgrounds and audiences under the guidance of the cognitive principles of relevance theory, so as to maximize the context of the audience and better promote the Chinese film market to the international market. Secondly, relevance theory reinterpretes film title translation from a pragmatic perspective, providing a theoretical basis for film title translation. The best relevance is the goal that the translator strives to achieve. Based on relevance theory, this paper analyzes film title translation, considers that the best relevance can be used as a criterion for evaluating the effect of film title translation and a guiding principle for film title translation, and puts forward some common translation strategies. One of the writing purposes of this paper is to explain the current situation of translating Chinese films, analyze the influence of relevance theory on the form, style, language and mode of thinking of films, and point out that the translation of film titles should take into account the cultural background, semantics and commercial functions of the language in order to avoid excessive cultural separation in translation.

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