

Analysis of the Subtitle Translation of *My people, My country* from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: With the development of cross-cultural communication, subtitle translation has gradually become an important part of translation in various countries. *My people, My country* is a masterpiece jointly directed by seven directors to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of China in 2019. The film contains four stories and tell the history of China's gradual prosperity and strength since its founding to domestic audiences. It also shows the strength of China to foreign audiences. Skopos theory is the most important theory in functionalist translation theory. It was founded by Vermeer, a German translation theorist, in the 1970s as an external study of translation. It focuses on the choice of various purposes in the process of translation and adds a new research perspective to the multi-disciplinary study of translation. This thesis will discuss and analyze the subtitle translation of *My people, My country* from the perspective of Skopos theory, and will use the three principles of Skopos Theory and the combination of literal translation, free translation, omission, amplification, conversation to analysis and discussion the subtitles in the film. By studying the translation methods and techniques of this film, more translators can pay more attention to the subtitle translation of China's excellent films, promote the international cultural communication of China's excellent films to a certain extent, and enable foreign viewers to have a better experience and make a better evaluation of China's excellent films.

Keywords: Skopos theory, Subtitle translation, Translation methods and techniques.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Skopos theory is the most influential and core content of German functional translation theory. The embryonic form of Skopos theory was originally put forward by Catherine Rice (Katharina Rice) of Germany in her book *the possibility and limitation of Translation criticism*, published in 1971. She believes that translation should pursue the consistency of content, form and communicative function. On this basis, his student Hans. Vermeer (Hans J. Vermeer) founded the Skopos Theory in *the Framework of General Translation Theory*. The theoretical term Skopos originates from Greek and means "purpose and motivation". Skopos theory holds that translation is a kind of action, which necessarily contains the purpose behind the action, and regards the static linguistic phenomenon as the behavior of cross-cultural communication, and its purpose is "purpose determines the way".

There are many pieces of literatures on various films in China, but the domestic translation circles pay little attention to the subtitle translation of *My people, My country*. Because it was October this year. The film was released, so no one has published any analysis of the subtitle translation of the film on the website of the knowledge Network or on the major library sites in recent months, so no one has published an analysis of the subtitle translation of the film on the website of the knowledge Network or the major libraries in recent months.

Because the film tells about the spirit of self-improvement and progress of the Chinese nation, it can make the viewers all over the world experience the towering moments since the founding of China and the study of the patriotic spirit and national spirit of the Chinese people. The subtitle translation of a film should express the feeling that the director wants to deliver, and the purpose of rendering is particularly important. *My people, My country* is not only a good work for the

founding of New China, but also a work that can make the world realize how China is moving towards a strong step by step. It is still hoped that there will be more and more literature on its subtitle translation.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This thesis studies subtitle translation of the film from the perspective of Skopos theory, which enables us to fully understand the characters' emotions and rich plots of the film. Since the film was released in October 2019, no scholars have written research papers related to subtitle translation of the film. So this paper can make the target audience realize the significance of film subtitle translation, make the target audience have a deeper understanding of the subtitle translation of this movie, and is of great significance for the film *My People, My Country* to spread Chinese culture in the target countries.

1.3. Methods of the Study

Based on the Skopos Theory of translation in German functional theory, this thesis uses the methods of literature research and case analysis to study the subtitle translation of *My people, My country* from various translation methods and techniques etc. and to analyze and judge whether the translation can better convey the content and emotion that the film and the director want to convey to the audience. The main form of the study is the comparison between the original film and the subtitle, and the purpose of using the words and the emotions conveyed are analyzed from the perspective of translation strategies. This thesis not only refers to books and articles related to Skopos theory of translation but also wants to fully understand whether the subtitle of the film has achieved the purpose of translation.

1.4. Structure of the Thesis

This paper is divided into five parts, introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, case study and

conclusion. In the introduction part, the research background, significance, methods of the study and structure of the thesis are presented. The second part combs through previous studies concerning Skopos theory in translation studies and subtitle translation of *My people, My country*. In theoretical framework, the thesis reviews the background of the theory and presents its contents in detail. The fourth part deals with case study. Examples will be discussed under the guidance of Skopos theory. In closing, the main research results will be concluded and limitations of the thesis will be discussed.

2. Literature Review

Every thesis guided by Skopos theory requires us to have a certain understanding of the Skopos theory and know how to use it, but in addition to understanding and using teleology is not enough, to complete a comprehensive and systematic thesis also requires us to have a certain understanding of the film studied in this paper, to fully understand the ideas of the film director, the emotional shaping of the character image and the final purpose of subtitle translation is to enable the audience to accept and feel the charm of the film.

2.1. Previous Studies on Skopos Theory

From 2016 to 2020, 2053 articles on Skopos Theory were found in the database, of which the language analysis of theory understanding, theory development history, film and television and celebrity works was the mainstream, accounting for as high as 97.64%. Among the film and television works, the most frequently studied works were the American drama "The Big Bang Bang", and the number of related documents was 13. In the theme of language analysis, most of the literature focuses on film subtitle translation, translation strategies, translation skills, functional teleology and other topics. For example, GE Zhengcheng of Xihua University expounded the characteristics of TV subtitles by taking the English subtitles of "Chinese Medicine" as an example, taking the English subtitles of "Chinese Medicine" as an example in "Skopos Theory" published by GE Zhengcheng of Xihua University, "the English Translation method of" Chinese Medicine "from the Perspective of Skopos Theory (2017 / 2018), taking the English subtitles of" Chinese Medicine "as an example. This thesis analyzes and explains how Skopos theory affects the choice of subtitle translation methods, and probes into how to adopt effective translation strategies and translation skills in the process of translation to enable foreign audiences to better understand and learn Chinese traditional medical culture (GE Zhengcheng, 2018). In addition, there are also a few literatures focusing on cultural characteristics, such as Yang chai's literature "Analysis of Cultural differences and subtitle Translation" published in Talent-Humanistic Highland. From the background of the increasing demand for cultural gap and communication caused by the development of globalization, the author focuses on the cultural differences between China and western countries, which points out that translators should realize subtitle translation based on Skopos theory. In order to better convey the cultural significance and cultural connotation (Yang Chai, 2018 / 184.) From the above data, in the past 10 years, in the domestic research literature, from the perspective of Skopos theory, the study of Skopos theory and translation methods of the film as a product still account for a large proportion.

2.2. Previous Studies on Subtitle Translation

From 2016 to 2020, there were 108 documents in the HowNet database with key words including "subtitle translation", of which 66% were about the mainstream direction of language analysis of each film and television works. Among the films and television works, the most frequently studied work was the American drama *Big Bang*, while the most used work for subtitle translation of Chinese films was *Farewell my concubine* and *Painted skin* have 6 related documents. In the theme of language analysis, most of the literature focuses on subtitle translation, translation strategies, translation skills and functional Skopos theory. For example, Guo shengqun of Beijing Second Foreign Language Institute published a series of films *Painted skin* from the perspective of Skopos theory English subtitles are analyzed and studied. The film contains a large number of ancient Chinese folk customs, historical allusions, Chinese philosophy and traditional Chinese medicine elements. Through the analysis and study of these difficulties, the author suggests that translators should adopt translation strategies to enable readers to achieve the goal of unobstructed movie viewing and cross-cultural communication, and build a concise and coherent translation from the perspective of the audience. In China, there are not a few pieces of research literatures on various kinds of films, but the domestic translation circle pays little attention to the subtitle translation of this film of *My people, My country*. Because the film was released in October last year, no papers have been published on HowNet or other major library websites in recent months. This film is a good one that publicizes the spirit of the Chinese nation's unremitting self-improvement and courageous progress. It can make domestic film makers realize all kinds of extraordinary moments since the founding of China and learn from the patriotic spirit and national spirit of the Chinese people. Therefore, the tone and feeling that can be expressed by subtitle translation of a movie and the rendering purpose that the translation should achieve are particularly important. The author of this thesis studies the subtitle translation of Chinese films, hoping that more excellent translators will be able to do more research and publish a series of thesis in the future, and promote the development and exchange of Chinese culture.

In this thesis, the author does the research which combines Skopos theory with the film *My People, My Country* to make up the gap.

3. Theoretical Framework

Skopos is translated into "purpose" in Greek. Skopos Theory of translation is a strategic theory applied to translation. Its core concept is that the main factor in the process of translation is the purpose of the whole translation. The term Skopos is usually used to refer to the purpose of the translation. In addition to Skopos, Vermeer also uses related words such as "aim", "purpose", "intention" and "function" to explain the theory. In order to avoid conceptual confusion, Nord proposes to make a basic distinction between intention and function: "intention" is defined from the perspective of the sender, while "function" refers to text function, which is determined by the expectations, needs, known knowledge and environmental conditions of the receiver. In Vermeer's Skopos framework, one of the most important factors determining the purpose of translation is the intended recipient. They have their own cultural background,

expectations for translation and communication needs. Each kind of translation points to a certain audience, so the translation is the source of some or all information for a certain purpose and target audience in the target language situation. It can be seen that the position of the original text in teleology is obviously lower than that in equivalence.

3.1. Background of Skopos Theory

Since the 1950s, western translation theories have developed in step with linguistics. Translation theories tend to view translation from a linguistic perspective. For example, Nida put forward the theory of "dynamic equivalence" based on linguistics, information theory and Semiotics in the 1960s, while Newmark put the translation into the study of semantics. Nida's and Newmark's theories are basically original oriented. Vermeer was dissatisfied with the fact that this kind of applied translation theory was divorced from reality, so he put forward the Skopos theory. Vermeer believes that only linguistics cannot help translation. First of all, translation is not only a behavior of language conversion. Second, linguistics alone cannot solve all the problems of translation. He believes that translation is a human activity and as purposeful as other activities. Any form of translation, including translation itself, should be regarded as an act, and any act should have a purpose or goal. As the second-generation leader of the Skopos theory, Nord found that Skopos theory has some limitations when he analyzed the Skopos theory. Therefore, based on functional translation theory, Nord added some details to Vermeer's theory and put forward the theory of "functional plus loyalty". He also emphasized the difference between loyalty and equivalence. Loyalty refers to the relationship between the translation and the original, that is, the translation should be faithful to the original. Loyalty is a category of interpersonal relationship, which means the social relationship between people.

3.2. Contents of Skopos Theory

The Skopos Theory of translation put forward by Vermeer is the most important one in the functional translation theory. Skopos is a Greek word, meaning "purpose, motivation, function". The purpose of translation is a significant concept in the skopos theory. There are three kinds of explanations for this purpose: the target text should achieve the purpose of communication in the context, such as enlightening the readers, etc. The purpose of a particular translation strategy or method, such as faithfully reproducing the translation style in a form close to the original text, and "purpose" refers to the purpose of the original text.

There are three principles in Skopos theory: the principle of loyalty, the principle of coherence and the principle of purpose. The first principle is that "any translation is produced by a given destination and serves this purpose", which is the primary and most important principle that any translator should abide by. Vermeer believes that human activities are purposeful and all activities are determined by the purpose. Similarly, translation also follows one or more purposes, that is to say, the core of translation is the function of the target text. The second principle of loyalty, "loyalty of the translation to the original", is that the translation should be faithful to the original, and the translation must be consistent with the original. It focuses on the transformation of the original text through translation, which requires that a certain relationship be maintained between the translation and the original text. In the principle of the loyalty of Skopos

theory, loyalty must be based on the translator's interpretation of the original text and the purpose of translation, that is to say, the principle of loyalty will change with the change of the purpose. The third principle of coherence is that "the information produced by the translator must be able to be interpreted in a coherently way in the context of the target audience". In another word, the translator must translate a more acceptable and meaningful translation by fully considering the cultural background and social environment of the target audience. That is to say, the consistency principle of the skopos theory requires that the translation be readable and acceptable to the greatest extent. Among the above three principles, the principle of coherence and the principle of loyalty are subordinate to the principle of purpose.

4. Case Study

4.1. The Purpose of My people, My country

With the National Day approaching in 2019, the film was released to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the motherland. Through seven-story units, the film shows the glorious years of our country's step-by-step development. Through the emotion and plot of the characters in these fragments, the movie instantly ignited the enthusiasm of all Chinese fans and aroused the patriotic feeling of Chinese people. At the same time, it has been released in many countries around the world. It is the first time that Chinese films have been released simultaneously in Europe. Although the movie was put into a competitive film environment, it is still loved by foreign friends who are curious about China's growth path. This is a patriotic blockbuster with a new idea to build the main chord. The film presents the glorious years of China in the form of audio-visual, which is used to inspire the national spirit, carry forward the patriotic enthusiasm and inspire the morale of the people. At the same time, it carries out the overseas export of Chinese culture and national soft power and has achieved success. It proves that patriotism is the strongest note of the times, the direction of the hearts of the people and the expectation of the people.

4.2. Translation Methods and Techniques

4.2.1. Literal Translation

Literal translation is an important translation method, which requires that the translation can fully convey the meaning of the original text and reflect the form and style of the original text. Literal translation is a widely used method in translation. The literal translation should not only be faithful to the original content, but also conform to the language and stylistic structure of the original. Literal translation should be faithful to the original content in the first place, and loyal to the original form in the second place. On the premise of maintaining the original content, it should strive to make the translation and the original infinitely close in terms of word selection, syntactic structure, image metaphor and style characteristics. Because people will have the same feelings and social experience to the objective things, the literal meaning and image meaning of these feelings are the same, and literal translation can be frequently used.

Example 1

ST: 救护车马上到

TT: The ambulance will arrive shortly.

After the successful development of China's first atomic

bomb, the researchers of national defense science and technology in the film began to have nosebleed due to some symptoms in the later stage due to long-term research on the atomic bomb. His leader was very worried after seeing this and immediately called the hospital to send an ambulance to best rescue him from the danger. Using literal translation, the translator translates this sentence into “The ambulance will arrive shortly”, while conveying the meaning of this sentence completely and also keeping the original form of the source text. This sentence embodies the principle of loyalty of the Skopos theory.

Example 2

ST: 以后啊你们就先跟着我

TT: From today, you'll be working with me.

This sentence is excerpted from the great historical moment of Shenzhou 11's successful landing in this movie. In this clip, a pair of young vagrant brothers meet the director of the retired Poverty Alleviation Office and their lives have changed. With the director's good intentions, they witnessed the successful landing of Shenzhou

11. This is what the director said when he was going to take in the two wandering brothers. This sentence uses the literal translation method, completely conveys the director's feelings for this pair of wandering brothers, and expresses the thoughts and feelings that the character wants to express. This sentence embodies the principle of loyalty of the Skopos theory and is loyal to the original meaning and form.

4.2.2. Free Translation

Free translation refers to the translation method that is only faithful to the original content, without keeping the structural form and rhetorical device of the original text. It requires that the translation, on the premise of maintaining the original content, strive to make the translation conform to the target readers' reading habits and aesthetics in terms of word selection, sentence structure, image metaphor and style characteristics as much as possible. Free translation is to start from the meaning of the sentence, as long as we want to express the general idea of the original text, we don't need to pay too much attention to the form, but we need the translation to be natural and fluent. Due to the influence of cultural and educational background, the literal meaning can not be preserved in translation, so the image of the original can be replaced by the image familiar to target audience, to convey the pragmatic purpose of the original and translate the implied meaning. The different development history, national culture and customs of the two languages have resulted in their unique ways of expression. Therefore, when translating, we must have a basic understanding of the language habits of the source text and target text, and can't translate word for word. Every language has a habit of expression, that is, it has an implication. On the premise of deeply understanding the spiritual essence of the original work, we should not stick to the literal meaning of the original work, but flexibly reproduce the exact meaning of the source text.

Example 3

ST: 国之重任,千小心万小心。

TT: It's a critical moment for the country.

This is from the opening ceremony part of the movie, the dialogue the army prepared the night before the founding of the country. After thousands of years of struggle and war, China has finally moved towards real reunification and

independence. It can be seen how important the founding ceremony is. All Chinese people are looking forward to this moment. All imperialists are eyeing the newly independent new China. Therefore, mistakes are not allowed to happen in the founding ceremony of the new China. This sentence not only expresses the importance of the founding ceremony, but also expresses the rigor of the army to the founding ceremony. The translator uses the free translation method to express the importance of the original to the founding ceremony. The translation of this sentence changes the sentence structure of the original text, and divides the original sentence into two sentences. It does not change the meaning that the original text wants to express. It uses free translation to reproduce the original meaning. This sentence follows the coherence principle. The translation expresses the meaning of the original and the importance of the founding ceremony.

Example 4

ST: 还是闹到眼皮子底下了。

TT: It happened under our noses regardless.

This sentence is also selected from the part of founding ceremony of the film, which reflects the rigor of the military and allows no mistakes. In addition to focusing on the president's speech, people all over the world focused on the PLA's military parade. The Chinese people's Liberation Army is a very strict army. In the face of the founding ceremony, it should be more rigorous, not make any mistakes, and let the people believe that the army can lead them to a happy and healthy life. In order to enable the foreign audience to fully understand the meaning of the original, the translator uses a more idiomatic way of expression. In Chinese, when something

happens around you, it will be described as "眼皮子底下", but there is no such saying in English, so the translator uses free translation to translate the proverbs into “under our noses”. The use of the free translation of this sentence shows that this incident can be brought to the bottom of our eyes, which shows that there is no mistake under the eyes of the army. This sentence follows the coherence principle and expresses the meaning of the original text, and makes foreign audiences better understand the meaning the film wants to express.

4.2.3. Omission

The focus of the Skopos theory is the target readers, while the focus of subtitle translation is the target audience. For subtitle translation, translating a Chinese film into English should be based on the cultural background and education of the native English-speaking audience. Chinese is a language with profound cultural background. Compared with English, there are many words and sentences which are relatively tedious. In order for foreign audiences to simply understand the Chinese context, it is necessary to adopt omission, in other words to omit some words or expressions. In case of a certain word or phrase on the phone appears, the translator can choose to reduce or omit this part without affecting the audience's understanding of the meaning of the film.

Example 5

ST: 首长已经特许我们进入广场了

TT: The chief has granted us permission to enter the Square.

This sentence comes from a fragment of the opening ceremony. When translated into English, the translator omitted "已经". This sentence realizes the principle of loyalty of the Skopos theory, and completely expresses the

original meaning to the audience.

Example 6

ST: 八盏大红宫灯笼也已经安装完毕

TT: Eight red lanterns are hanging.

This sentence is selected from the fragment of the founding ceremony. When it was translated into English in Chinese, it omitted "完毕". The translator used present continuous tense to translate the source text. The meaning of "完毕" in Chinese is consistent with the meaning of "finished" in English, indicating that the task has been completed. While the version "are hanging" indicates that the task is been completed, so the word "完毕" is omitted in the translation to avoid the semantic repetition in English. The translation conforms to the coherence principle of Skopos theory. The use of tense avoids the semantic repetition in the sentences of the translation, and enables the foreign audience to understand the director's meaning smoothly.

4.2.4. Amplification

Due to the different ways of expression between English and Chinese, it is possible to increase the number of words in translation. Amplification is to add some words according to the meaning, rhetoric and syntax of the original, so as to express the ideological content of the original more idiomatically and smoothly. This is not to add words out of nothing, but to add some words to make the version more acceptable and understandable.

Example 7

ST: 我们按照比例缩小三分之一,同样的线路,用材,材质,同样的环形和连接点,同样的开关的装置。

TT: We scaled down to one-third the size, with the same routes, materials and textures, the same loops and connectors, and the same button and gears.

This sentence is selected from a sentence in the flag raising ceremony. The translator added the article "the" several times. The article "the" should be added in front of the same thing mentioned above in English, which means special reference, so the article "the" should be added in Chinese. The translation of this sentence conforms to the principle of loyalty in the Skopos theory. By adding articles in line with English grammar, the audience can understand the original meaning accurately.

Example 8

ST: 你找不到问题的根本,找不到隐患,去广场一百次也没用。

TT: If you can't find the root of the problem or hidden errors, going there 100 times wouldn't even solve anything.

This sentence is selected from the speech with the management officer before the founding ceremony. The translator adds a word "if" in this sentence, and the translator used an adverbial clause of condition to render the source sentence. If we omit the phrase "假如" in Chinese, Chinese can understand the meaning of the sentence smoothly. If you omit the word "if" in English, the foreigner audience cannot understand the meaning of the sentence. The "if" clause shows the opposite hypothesis with the present fact. The translation of the sentence conforms to the principle of coherence in the Skopos theory, adding articles in accordance with English grammar, so that foreign audiences can understand the original meaning more coherently and fluently.

4.2.5. Conversation

The translation of film subtitles must be concise, vivid, clear and fluent, and easy to understand. Conversion is frequently used in subtitle translation. Conversion refers to the conversion of parts of speech in the original sentence in order to make the translation conform to the habits of expressions in the target language in the process of translation.

Example 9

ST: 庆典可不敢再出事了

TT: Hope there aren't any incidents in the ceremony.

This sentence comes from a fragment of the founding ceremony. "出事" is a verb in source text, and in the translation, the verb is converted into a noun "incidents". The translation of this sentence conforms to the principle of coherence in the Skopos theory. Although the conversion is used, the original meaning is completely expressed to the audience.

Example 10

ST: 没有时间修改了。

TT: There's no time for alternations.

This sentence comes from a fragment of the founding ceremony. "修改" is a verb in source text, and in the translation, the verb is converted into a noun "alternations". The translation of this sentence conforms to the principle of loyalty in the Skopos theory. Although the part of speech in the translation has been transformed, the original meaning has been completely expressed to the audience so that the audience can understand what the director wants to express.

5. Conclusion

This thesis analyzes the film from the perspective of the Skopos theory. Subtitle translation, as a special mode of translation, is a purposeful act of translation. The translator of *My people, My country's* subtitle translation has set a very good example for us in this respect. The whole film mainly adopts literal translation and free translation. Several translation techniques, such as omission, amplification and conversation are also used to express the characters' emotion and rich plots to the foreign audience, to realize the function of subtitle translation smoothly, and to accurately reproduce the original content of the film to the audience, so that the Chinese film can shock and move more foreign audiences.

Because of the author limited ability she can't reflect well the translator's superb translation skills. The author can only choose some representative examples to show the translator's skills and emotional expression of translating subtitles of the film. *My people, My country* is a film that can show the patriotism of the Chinese people very much. The author hopes more scholars can study and perfect the subtitle translation.

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