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论文题目 观众作为电影字幕翻译的焦点——语境与关联

Viewers as the Focus of Movie Subtitling:

Context and Relevance

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摘　要

电影字幕作为一种新兴的翻译实践模式，有其自身的特点。在现代社会的大众传媒和跨文化交际的过程中，字幕翻译发挥着越来越不容忽视的作用，同时也吸引了各国翻译家和研究者越来越多的关注。系统的影视翻译理论已经在许多欧洲国家初具雏形，随着改革开放的深入和愈益频繁的跨文化交流活动的开展，中国的翻译界也开始对这种新的翻译类型进行研究。但纵观中外对于影视字幕翻译的论述，以电影的受众为焦点的研究却甚少。

电影是一种声画艺术，观看一部带有字幕的外国影片对于目的观众意味着进行一场剧烈的脑力活动，因为他们在解读密集的画面信息的同时还要分散注意去阅读荧幕下面的文字。理想的字幕在于能够在有限的时间和空间内为目的观众提供与原片观众相同的体验，要实现这一目标，就必须充分考虑目的观众在观看影片时的心理因素：他们的认知环境、心理需求、接收能力以及知识储备等。本文基于人类在认知过程中总是希望以最少的心理努力获取最多的关联信息这一普遍的心理特征，并借助传统的语境观，考察了影片字幕的原文语境和目的观众的心理语境的特点，探讨了怎样做出具体的翻译决策，以在原文语境和目的观众的心理语境中建立一种最佳关联，使目的观众能够最大程度的获得同原片观众相同的感受。

关键词：字幕翻译，语言语境，情景语境，文化语境，观众心理语境，关联，以目的观众为核心的翻译法

Abstract

Little research has so far been done into movie subtitling from the perspectives of both context and relevance in the field of translation studies at home and abroad. The present thesis is going to address the issue from the said perspectives.

To begin with, by analyzing various contexts related to subtitling, it intends to explore the role of contextual factors in practical decision-making. It observes there are four types of contexts concerned: linguistic context, context of situation, context of culture and the target viewer's internal context.

At the same time, to guarantee that the subtitled text will fulfill its function and convey to the target audience the experience they would have as if they knew the foreign language, the thesis holds that optimal relevance should be established and maintained between contexts of the source-text (original movie as a whole) and the target-language viewer. With the target viewer being the primary focus, their cognitive environments and needs, their sharing knowledge with the source-text receivers all have bearings in subtitling strategies. And for the special constraints imposed upon movie translation, a viewer-oriented, image-bound approach seems to be preferred most frequently; however, the thesis argues such a measure must be taken under the guidance of relevance theory. Under the guiding principle of a viewer-oriented approach, some creative strategies are incorporated which will work in concert with each other.

Key words: subtitling; linguistic context; context of situation; context of culture;

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Chapter I Introduction

Profound and enormous changes have been taking place in such fields as economics, politics, culture, technology, education and trade since China conducted and continued with its policy of reform and opening up to the outside world. Meanwhile, the advanced modern science and technology, which are developing by leaps and bounds, have enabled us to have an effective and efficient communication with people from all corners of the globe. As a result, people become all the more aware of the significant role that translation is playing in the course of communication across national boundaries. It goes without saying that translation is such an effective tool in cross-cultural communication and as a matter of fact, "the twentieth century has been called the 'age of translation' (Jumpelt, 1961)" (Newmark, 2001a:3), which is also the case with the current situation.

The modern world has witnessed dramatic transformation and a reshaping occurring in people's thinking and way of life. The exponential growth in science and technology is narrowing the distance between mankind, thus bringing different races into a so-called global village. During this ongoing process of globalization, people, regardless of age or class, have displayed an ever stronger desire to learn from others and to know more about foreign cultures. While the great multitude of foreign literary classics like novels, dramas, prose, operas and poems generally take a long time for people to "chew and digest" and hence are discarded by many moderners, movies, videos and TV programs have turned out to be such an efficient channel for information acquisition and mass communication that they have won an increasing popularity among people in today's society. The audio-visual media have actually entered almost every household and become an essential part of people's daily life. Just as Hillis Miller (1987) announces: "Our common culture, however much we wish it were not so, is less and less a book culture and more and more a culture of cinema, television and popular music." With a perfect combination of sound and image, movies and TV plays have replaced literature in a certain degree to reflect the culture of the modern world. It is in this background that audiovisual translation has made its debut since the appearance of "the 'talkies' in the late 1920s" (Schwarz, 2003:52) and

its manufactured works have been growing at a fast pace in compliance with modern mass communication. However, it is quite a pity to see that "a traditional English snobbery puts literary translation on a pedestal and regards other translation as hackwork, or less important, or easier" (Newmark, 2001a:5-6), and that "translation theory was limited until quite recently to cultural monuments such as the Bible or the works of Classical Antiquity, as well as outstanding works of literature, particularly poetry and drama" (Snell-Hornby, 2001:7). Due to such a "supercilious" attitude, the relatively new genre, audiovisual translation, has suffered a long neglect from the academic circles of translation studies. A most persuasive evidence comes from the fact that by far the scarcity of books and articles published within this line and there yet exists a tendency of refraining from accepting audiovisual translation as a type of translation: "All the constraints of audiovisual translation have made certain people even within the field of audiovisual translation regard their job as 'adaptation' rather than translation" (Papdakis 1997; Delabastita 1989:213-214, qtd. in Karamitroglou, 2000:10). Nonetheless, the seminal impact that the audiovisual translation is having and will have cannot afford to be long ignored.

In recent years, this newly rising translation genre is beginning to draw a growing attention from the academic circles of translation studies. Hatim and Mason (2001:2) claimed that "once all texts are seen as evidence of a communicative transaction taking place within a social framework, the way is open to a view of translating which is not restricted to a particular field—religious, literary, scientific— but which can include such diverse activities as film subtitling and dubbing, simultaneous interpreting, cartoon translating, abstracting and summarizing, etc.". In the meantime, scholars from some European countries have made their due contributions to the discussion and analysis of the subject, and have so far carried out fruitful results; among them Fotio Karamitroglou, Henrik Gottlieb, Dirk Delabastita Irena Kovacic, Christopher Taylor, to name just a few, stand out well. In China, this emergent translation type has also won acclaim from some practitioners as well as theorists such as Qian Shaochang, Zhang Chunbai, Li Yunxing, and Chai Meiping who share their opinions which are primarily based on their own translating

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experience or practice within the field of audiovisual translation. Nevertheless, studies in this area seem to be far from being enough, compared with the importance of audiovisual translation. Owing to a lack of systematic research on the whole, there is an urgent call for an amalgamation of theoretical and practical studies on audiovisual translation and such an integrated attempt is sure to result in a better understanding of this line as well as a holistic improvement of the theoretical translation studies in general.

Subtitling, as one of the major types of movie translation, is a field that remains largely unexplored. Under the rapid development in science and technology of the modern world, audiovisual media have virtually entered almost every household and common people have gained closer access to foreign movies. They either share the large and wide screen with other audiences at movie theatres, or buy videos and enjoy the pleasure of watching a classic to their heart's content at home. For its advantages of time-efficiency and cost-effectiveness in reaching international audiences and markets, subtitling therefore deserves higher interest and closer attention from academic circles of translation studies. "Translation studies is nowadays overwhelmed by a number of attempts to discard prescriptive standpoints and adopt new, descriptive directions. As a consequence, the research effort has been shifted from an investigation of things that should be done to an investigation of things that are being done. Audiovisual/Screen translation is not left out of the trend. In Europe, current research into subtitling is oriented towards an attempt to describe the various subtitling practices around the countries of the continent rather than to dictate what practices should be followed. In other words, the attempt nowadays is rather to describe the various subtitling conventions being followed throughout Europe, rather than to impose new ones."(Karamitroglou, 1998:1) This descriptive trend is exactly what the present thesis is going to move towards. Chapter I of the thesis is a brief introduction to the current status of audiovisual translation study in modern society. Chapter II begins with an overview of audiovisual translation and the definition of some key conceptual terms. Chapter III and Chapter IV constitute the main body of the

thesis, in which ChapterIIIgives an analysis to different contexts with a view to the subtitling functioning as a cross-cultural communicative text type. By identifying four different types of contexts and their respective role in movie subtitling, the author of this thesis (hereinafter referred to as the Author) intends readers to see how significant a role the context plays in the decision making of subtitling process and how it leads to specific strategies. And ChapterIV aims at exploring the concept of relevance for the reduction strategy in movie subtitling as to establish the optimal relevance between context of the source-text (the movie as a whole) and that of the target viewer. The elaboration will be illustrated by a number of typical examples picked up from some classics. Due to the limited space and resources collected, the intended discussion will be focused on the Chinese subtitling of English movies.

Chapter II Literature Review

1. A General Introduction to Audiovisual Translation

1.1 An Overview of Audiovisual Translation

"Audiovisual translation" has also been referred to as "screen translation" or "film translation". Compared with the other two terms, "audiovisual translation" "emphasizes the audio-visual dimensions of the communicative mode. Unlike communication through books, radio, telephone, or sign language, audio-visual communication implies that both the acoustic channel through air vibrations and the visual channel through light waves are simultaneously utilized. The term "audiovisual translation" stresses the need to accommodate in the process of translation the requirements of both these channels." (Karamitroglou, 2000:1-2) Thus "audiovisual translation" in general means "the translation of recorded audiovisual material" (Ibid, 2000:2)

As an important tool for modern communication, audiovisual translation has become a quite common phenomenon in the contemporary world. Such is indicated by the fast-increasing number of programs introduced from foreign countries and the enormous translating work done within this field. "Globally, this is the age of mass communications, of multimedia experiences and a world where audiences demand the right to share the latest text, be it film, song, or book simultaneously across cultures." (Bassnett qtd. by Alvarez 1996:1, cit. in Szarkowska, 2005:6) "The electronic media explosion of the 1990s and its implications for the processes of globalization highlighted issues of intercultural communication."(Bassnett, 2004:1) therefore, the quality of audiovisual translation stands out as extremely important in cross-cultural communication and cultural construction. And now the prejudice against audiovisual translation as a translation type has generally been removed. With more and more attention drawn and, large multitude of research is being dedicated to this particular area. Fotio Karamitroglou, a scholar with special interest in the area, has made his share of contribution in the essay *A Proposed Set of Subtitling Standards in Europe* and with the book *Towards a Methodology for the Investigation of Norms in*

Audiovisual Translation, in which he proposed to study audiovisual translation within the framework of a polysystem and thus set up a macro-structural approach. As an authority within the scope, Henrik Gottlieb has devoted quite a number of essays including *Subtitling —a New University Discipline*(1992), *Subtitling: People Translating People* (1994), *You Got the Picture? On the Polysemiotics of Subtitling Wordplay* (1997), etc. to the discussion of subtitling, addressing such theoretical aspects as the definition and classification of subtitling, its technical constraints and pragmatic dimensions as well as the more practical subtitling strategies with a view to the particularities of subtitling. Christopher Taylor (1999&2000), by applying Halliday's functional grammar into the analysis of dialogue subtitling, explores how such concepts as context, coherence, and register can affect the actual subtitling process. Meanwhile, a good few scholars are also paying close attention to this comparatively new translation genre and are dedicating their research findings to the topic. For example, in the essay *The Viewer as the Focus of Subtitling: Towards a Viewer-oriented Approach*, Ali Hajmohammadi probes into the role of viewers' cognitive aspect in subtitle reading and draws a conclusion that viewing subtitles makes a dual demands on the viewers, for which he suggests that when writing subtitles, the subtitler should take the viewer and their needs into full consideration, trying to relieve their burden.

On the one hand, such famous journals as *Translation Journal, Meta and Babel* are published with lots of research papers concerning audiovisual translation; on the other hand, a great number of research institutes are also established with the purpose of serving as a guide for audiovisual translation. For example, the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST), the European Institute for the Media (EIM) and the Independent Television Commission (ITC), to name just a few. As members from these institutes, some scholars have already become noted by their substantial contributions to the study of audiovisual translation.

Whereas, in China, research into audiovisual translation is still in its infancy. Except for some introductory remarks and summary of practical experience, there seems to be little or no systematic study pertaining to this subject. Among the few scholars who

have paid their notice to the area, Qian Shaochang, the translator of the well-known American TV series *Growing Pains*, tried to attract attention from the academic circles to the significance of audiovisual translation by his exploration of the specialties of screen language and the unique qualities of audiovisual translation (2000:61-65). Another scholar Li Yunxing also shared his ideas in *Strategies for Translating Subtitles* (2001:38-40) while Cai Meiping offered some aiding advice on how to reconstruct, modify and transform culture image in audiovisual translation (2001:91-94) Although these discussions are just reflections of their personal practice or experience, they have somehow opened up a new ground for us to cultivate and delve into the depth of a systematic and theoretical research. Fawcett once pointed out: "Research difficulties such as the atheoretical nature of most existing audiovisual translation studies and the lack of a consistent corpus of translated audiovisual material aggravate the problem." (Fawcett, 1996:66 qtd. in Karamitroglou 2000:10) This is particularly the case in such country as China, where it is only after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 that audiovisual translation first started. With a relatively short history and a long suffering neglect in this area, it is high time that we devoted ourselves to the advancement of audiovisual translation study in response to the urgent call of the age.

1.2 Categorization of Audiovisual Translation

Although "audiovisual-translation scholars seem to disagree even upon the rudimentary typology of the language transfer methods that constitute 'audiovisual translation'" (Karamitroglou, 2000:4), most of them do share the same idea that there are at least two basic categories: subtitling and revoicing with the latter being further divided by Karamitroglou into dubbing (lip-sync), narration (including voice-over) and free-commentary. (Ibid) In general, "revoicing" is defined as "the audiovisual language transfer methods of 'dubbing', 'narration' and 'free-commentary' collectively, and describes the attempt to cover (partly or entirely) the spoken source text of an original audiovisual production by a new spoken target text. (Dries, 1995a:

9 qtd. in Karamitroglou, 2000:5). Within this categorization, dubbing is the most frequently and widely adopted method in translating TV programmes and movies, and sometimes the two terms "revoicing" and "dubbing" are used interchangeably. Since revoicing is not the Author's present concern, there seems to be no need to go into its elaboration; while for the other form subtitling, which is the primary focus of the thesis, will be given full consideration later.

1.3 The Nature of Audiovisual Translation

There is a long-standing contempt against audiovisual translation that can be traced in Ballester (1995:178 cit. in Karamitroglou, 2000:10): But it is a well-known fact that audiovisual translation has always been considered inferior to (written) literary translation, most probably because of the lack of cultural prestige in audiovisual mass-media, compared to canonized literature. However, such contempt is not only shortsighted, but also ill-founded. As a matter of fact, huge quantities of movies or TV series are adapted from literary works; and moreover, at present, there emerges a tendency which is ready to accept translations of audiovisual material as 'literary facts' in a systemic constellations of relations under the precondition that it views 'literature' as "the totality of the activities involved with the literary system" and 'literary system' as "the network of relations that is hypothesized to obtain between a number of activities called 'literary', and consequently these activities themselves observed via the network. (Even-Zohar, 1990:28 &54 cit. in Karamitroglou, 2000:13) On the other hand, given the auditive and visual qualities of audiovisual translation, movie is such a complicated and comprehensive form of art that it overlaps literary genres like fiction, drama, poetry etc. in many ways. Thus there is no wonder that it is incorporated by She Xiebin into Chinese literature as a type of audiovisual literature. (余协斌, 2001: 53) Besides, another important reason to count movie into literary line lies in its language. As a core element, the language of a movie is mainly composite of well-thought-of dialogues created beforehand. These dialogues are multifunctional as not only do they contribute to the development of the tight-knit plot, but they also

display a portrayal of the vivid characters, set a mirror reflecting their inner feelings and serve as well to reveal the movie theme. In other words, the language of movie works both informatively and esthetically and in this sense, it is a literary language by nature; hence the translation of screen language wins itself the quality of literary translation.

2. Definition of Subtitling

"Subtitling is the translation of the spoken (written) source text of an audiovisual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen." (Gottlieb, 1994a; Gottlieb, 1998:247; Luyken et al., 1991:31; Delabastita, 1989:200 cit. in Karamitroglou. 2000:5) A more specific definition would be the one that subtitling is a (1) written, (2) additive, (3) synchronous type of translation of a (4) fleeting and (5) polysemiotic text type. (Gottlieb, 1997b) And he (Ibid) further explained these five points in detail:

(1) Being of a written—as opposed to a spoken—nature, subtitling differs from all other types of audiovisual translation.

(2) The label additive indicates that verbal material is added to the original, retaining the source language discourse.

(3) The label synchronous reflects the fact that the original work (with or without the original dialogue) and the translation are presented simultaneously—unlike "simultaneous" interpreting, where the interpreter always lags behind.

(4) The term fleeting refers to the fact that, in filmic media, all discourse is presented in a flowing manner, beyond the control of the receptor.

(5) As we already know, the term polysemiotic states the fact that the target language rendering only covers one of several interacting channels of communication in the translated version.

3. Classification of Subtitling

Subtitles are classified according to different criteria. Gottlieb (1998) suggested that subtitling be categorized from the linguistic and technical aspects respectively. Two types of subtitling can be distinguished linguistically:

(a) Intralingual subtitling (in the original language). This includes:

- subtitling of domestic programmes for the Deaf and hard of hearing

- subtitling of foreign-language programmes for language learners.

Intralingual subtitling is vertical, in the sense that it involves taking speech down in writing, changing mode but not language.

(b) Interlingual subtitling. This type is diagonal, in the sense that the subtitler crosses over from speech in one language to writing in another, thus changing mode and language. (Gottlieb, ed. by Baker, 2004:247)

Technically, another distinction can be drawn:

(a) Open subtitles (not optional). These include:

- cinema subtitles, which are either a physical part of the film (as in films for public viewing) or transmitted separately (for example at festival screenings)

- interlingual television subtitles transmitted terrestrially and broadcast as part of the television picture.

(b) Closed subtitling (optional, transmitted as teletext). This type includes:

- television subtitles for the Deaf and hard of hearing, selected by the individual viewer on a remote-control unit and generated by a decoder in the television set

- interlingual television subtitles transmitted by satellite, allowing different speech communities to receive different versions of the same programme simultaneously. (Ibid)

In this thesis, the discussion of subtitling is restricted to interlingual, open subtitling with specific reference to Chinese subtitling appears simultaneously in English movies or TV plays, unless otherwise stated.

4. Characteristics of Subtitling

Though it falls within the realm of literary translation, audiovisual translation as a particular translation type draws its distinction in many respects. The main characteristics it takes on primarily derive from its audio-visual particularity. Unlike the conventional written literary genres such as novel, essay, drama, light fiction, poetry which for most of the time is printed on paper and which have the one and only fragile channel at disposal: the printed word (Gottlieb, 1994b). Audiovisual texts, on the contrary, are endowed with plenty of other resources they have recourse to:

moving images, composition of pictures, dialogues, soundtracks, and music scores etc. In other words, audiovisual products can take advantage of both the audio and visual communicative modes at the same time. Thus subtitling, being a major audiovisual translation type, constantly involves a double transfer: the change in code from the temporally organized oral code to the linear written code and the switch from one language to another. (Gambier,1994). That is why Henrik Gottlieb, the authority in subtitling, regarded interlingual subtitling as a kind of "diagonal" translation, in which the "subtitler crosses over from speech in on language to writing in another, thus changing the mode and language". (Gottlieb, cit. in Baker, 2004:247) It is in this sense that movie subtitlers work under the pressure that is similar to "dancers dancing in fetters" (夏平, ed. by 谢天振: 2000:209). O'Shea summarized the general characteristics of audiovisual translation in the following statement: "It is true that there are a number of constraints that derive mainly from the audio-visual nature of the original and target products and which distinguish audiovisual translation from (written) literary translation, the later being the main inspiration for general translation theory: a) temporal constraints in revoicing, b) spatiotemporal constraints in subtitling, c) the accompanying visual source-culture elements in both revoicing and subtitling, d) the accompanying aural source-language elements in subtitling, e) the lip-sync imperative in dubbing, f) the cross-semiotic nature of subtitling, and g) the inability of backtracking (with the exception of video) in both subtitling and revoicing (O'Shea, 1996:240, cit. in Karamitroglou, 2000:10). In particular, subtitling is a text type that is constrained by spatiotemporal factors, the accompanying visual source-culture as well as the aural source-language elements, the polysemioticity and the instantaneity. For these recognized features, they will be discussed respectively in the following part.

4.1 Spatiotemporal Constraint

Spatiotemporal constraint, which has also been called technical or physical constraint, refers to the constraints imposed by space and time. As the term implies, space

constraint has to do with the size of the screen and the availability of space on the screen while time constraint is concerned with the pace of the characters' talking as well as the appropriate processing time that should be allotted to viewers. Up until now, no unifying standard has been established on how many subtitled words should be projected at a time on the screen, but a piloting principle claims that "the general practice of the production and layout of TV subtitles should be guided by the aim to provide maximum appreciation and comprehension of the target films as a whole by maximizing the legibility and readability of the inserted subtitled text."(Karamitroglou, 1998:2) With this guiding maxim in mind, Karamitroglou carried out a thorough survey of the production and layout of subtitles in his paper *A Proposed Set of Subtitling Standards in Europe*. Although the research is based on the various circumstances in several European countries, the formula it established has "abridged different subtitling conventions", and thus has achieved some universality by and large. (Ibid) It revealed that "the maximum of two lines of subtitles should be presented at a time. And each subtitle line should allow around 35 characters in order to be able to accommodate a satisfactory portion of the (translated) spoken text and minimize the need for original text reduction and omissions."(Ibid: 3) And it is also suggested that "a full two line subtitle containing 14-16 words should remain on the screen for a maximum time of something around 6 seconds and for a full single-line subtitle of 7-8 words the necessary maximum duration time would be around 3 1/2 seconds to secure ample reading time."(Ibid: 3-5) Besides, considering there are scenes where there is a lot of information for the viewer to process and the actual capacity of human brain, it is a fact that the language used for subtitling needs to be more concise and compact.

4.2 The Accompanying Visual Source-culture and Aural Source-language Elements

Movie is such a melting pot that fuses the arts of painting, literary writing, and music composition into a complicated and comprehensive whole. Viewers enjoy the

enthralling pictures while listening to the beautiful sounds in harmony with the images. It is an all-encompassing experience which has enticed people ever since the medium's earliest days. And in order to have such enchanting enjoyment with a foreign movie, most of the time people have to resort to subtitles. However, problems may arise as both the visual images and aural source-language elements demand that subtitles match them. People feast their eyes on the images strewn with exotic flavors as well as the subtitled texts while listening to a foreign accent. Therefore, to achieve a perfect combination of all these dynamic and static elements, "there must be some agreement between the subtitles, the spoken source language dialogue, and the corresponding image."(Baker 1998, cit. in Schwarz, 2002:2) In no way should "spectators find cinema's powerful scene of mimesis muddled by subtitles" (Nornes, 1999:1). In this regard, the subtiltler "carries a heavy burden of responsibility in terms of transferring semantic, pragmatic and cultural content" (Taylor, 2000:1) so as to "give the target audience the experience they would have if they already knew the foreign language"(Gottlieb, 1994:265 cit. in Taylor, 2000:1).

4.3 Polysemioticity

Traditional written literary materials are printed words on book pages, thus they are "monosemiotic texts that use only one channel of communication and the translator therefore controls the entire medium of expression."(Gottlieb, ed. by Baker, 2004:245) In movies and TV programs, the translator is facing with four channels simultaneously:(a) the verbal auditory channel, including dialogue, background voices, and sometimes lyrics; (b) the non-verbal auditory channel, including music, natural sound and sound effects; (c) the verbal visual channel, including superimposed titles and written signs on the screen; (d) and the non-verbal visual channel: picture composition and flow. (Ibid) In the act of subtitling, the subtitler works within this polysemiotic environment. Both the visual and audio channels are at his/her disposal. Albeit these on occasion can inflict rigorous restrictions on the subtitler, they are also support of the translation in the narrative communication. While the viewer is

privileged to hear the authentic sounds and enjoy the original flavor of the dialogues, they have to "cope with a sizable volume of written text, superimposed on the screen" (Baker, 1998 cit. in Schwarz, 2002:4) and "divide his or her attention between the images and the written translation" (Goris, 1993:171 cit. in Baker, 2004:75). This constant diversion of focus not only requires demanding efforts, but also inevitably results in loss of some important information at times.

Still, a problem worth noticing here is the change of discourse mode. As subtitling requires the transition from spoken discourse into written mode, the intricate nuances in spoken language such as tone, pauses, dialectal varieties, fragmented utterances as well as verbal redundancy cannot be fully reflected in written subtitles for which conciseness is a must due to the spatiotemporal pressure.

4.4 Instantaneity

Since movie is basically composed by frames which are presented in a style of continuous flow, the viewers thus have no way but to concentrate on the progress of the ongoing images. In the meantime, they must pay constant attention to the writing subtitled text that coordinates well with the moving pictures. Therefore, unlike the conventional printed literature which the readers can repeat whenever and wherever they like, the movie subtitles are deprived of such retrievability. Consequently, it "entails more varied cognitive activities in decoding segments of the image and connecting these segments to the overall discourse woven into the audiovisual structure of the film"(Gottlieb, 1991:162 cit. in Hajmohammadi, 2005:2). This in turn requests the viewers' immediate comprehensibility in target-language context free of footnotes as well as the subtitler's creativity to reconstruct an easily understandable text within the target-culture.

5. Social Preference for Subtitling in China

Talking about the variance among countries in their preference for different translating methods of audiovisual products, Gottlieb identified that "subtitles tend to be favored for traditional reasons in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Israel, Egypt and throughout the Arab world. By contrast, dubbing is 'the

standard method of translating film and television in a number of European countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain." (Cit. in Coelh, 2005:5)

As a large developing country, it is only after the year 1949 that China started its translating activity of audiovisual products. At that time, most of the imported foreign movies were dubbed because only a small group of people had access to foreign movies and few of them could understand foreign languages. Nowadays, things have changed tremendously. With a great multitude of foreign movies imported each year, the common people are faced with a wide range of choices: they can decide whether to go to the cinema and enjoy the large screen or they can just stay in front of the home theatre. Besides, numerous VCDs and DVDs of classics are vended in stores for people's easy purchase. In this situation, the subtitled movies seem to win bigger popularity among more and more movie lovers who would prefer to watch their favorites in the original. The reasons lying behind these may be that they want to hear the authentic voices of their fond actors/ actresses, or on other occasions, they could benefit most out of subtitles with a deep incentive to facilitate their foreign language learning. Besides, nowadays people's interest in foreign cultures has been on the rise and subtitles go along with this line. Apart from that, subtitled movies are available for those disabled in hearing, thus offering everybody the same opportunity to enjoy the charm of moving pictures.

Another cause of the preference for subtitled foreign movies in China results from their advantages in time-efficiency and cost-economy, while dubbing industry is kind of a heavy burden both for the subtitler and for the government. As Gottlieb (1997b) pointed out: "Today, the balance between the two rivals of audiovisual translation (subtitling and dubbing) is slowly shifting toward subtitling, partly for economic reasons: the increasing production and exchange of films and TV programs, combined with the fact that the number of TV channels is outgrowing the number of TV households, calls for a translation method quicker and cheaper than dubbing."

ChapterⅢ Contexts in Movie Subtitling: A Communicative Perspective

1. Subtitles: A Fourth Text Type

"According to Karl Bühler (1990: 28), language serves simultaneously to represent (objectively), express (subjectively) and appeal (persuasively). (Reiss, 2004:25) Based on Karl Bühler's threefold division of language functions, Katharina Reiss developed three dimensions of language: Logic, esthetic and dialogic. (Ibid: 36) She further explored three basic text types (Texttypen) in line with the dominant communicative function, namely content-focused text (informative), form-focused text (expressive) and appeal-focused text (operative) (Ibid: 26) and tried to incorporate various conventional text genres or varieties (Textsorten) like reference books, lectures, satires and advertisements into the three categories according to the different functions they actually perform. (Nord, 2001:37) By such categorization, Reiss suggested that evaluation of each translation be carried out under different criteria for different text types. In addition to these three text types, Reiss later identified a fourth one that she designated as the "audiomedial" type. "Such texts are written to be spoken (or sung) and hence are not read by their audience but heard, often with the aid of some extra-linguistic medium, which itself plays a part in the mediation of the complex literary blend." (Reiss, 2004: 27) The sorts of text that belong to this type typically include "radio newscasts and reports, topical surveys and dramatic production, text that requires the use of and a degree of accommodation to a non-linguistic medium in order to communicate with the hearer, whether in the source or in the target language."(Ibid: 43) Also included here are those musical texts which fit words and music together and all works for stage performance like musicals, operettas, operas, comedies and tragedies. Though these audio-medial texts are diversified in variety, they share the distinctive quality that, to a large degree, they depend on "non-linguistic (technical) media and on graphic, acoustic, and visual kinds of expression." and they "do not represent the simple transcription of oral communications, but rather are more or less important components of a larger complex." So in order to bring their "full potentials" into play, they must be treated as a whole in combination with their expressive means. (Ibid)

Subtitling is "the translation of the spoken (written) source text of an audiovisual product into a written target text which is added onto the images of the original product, usually at the bottom of the screen." (Gottlieb, 1994a; Gottlieb, 1998:247; Luyken et al., 1991:31; Delabastita, 1989:200, cit. in Karamitroglou. 2000:5) As its definition indicates, subtitle is a kind of text type that involves transition of expressive mode from spoken language into written language; meanwhile it is superimposed on the images of the original product and works simultaneously with the other audiovisual elements. Taking the various characteristics into consideration, movie subtitles can be safely incorporated into the audio-medial text type, thus is counted as a fourth text type.

2. The Role of Subtitling

As it is mentioned above, subtitling is a recognized multimedial text type. And since the current time is "the age of mass communication" and the contemporary world is a place replete with "multimedia experiences" (Szarkowska, 2005:6), subtitling takes on brand-new look in the modern world in light of its significance in cross-cultural as well as in mass-media communication.

2.1 Subtitling and Modern Communication

Translation, being an extremely important instrument of interlingual communication ever since the end of World War II (Wilss, 2001:11), and "the establishment of communication between people belonging to different speech communities has long been an important form of linguistic performance." (Ibid:17) With the rapid development of modern mass media, however, the communication among different peoples and the information exchange between various communities have been growing at an unprecedented rate. "It should therefore come as no surprise that, in a world beginning to develop from mass communication to universal or global communication and becoming ever more complex in terms of technology and organization, Translation is becoming increasingly important as a medium of international communication." and "it is no exaggeration to say that the relationship between man and his environment is today effected largely in the form of a permanent

communication process in which, in many spheres, information from foreign countries plays almost as important a role as that from one's own country."(Ibid: 18-19) Movie gains its worldwide popularity due to the fact that it can hold people spellbound and the experience of watching a movie is more intense for them than any other medium. In our daily life, not only does movie works as an effective tool for mass media communication, also it provides a glamorous wonderland where people could feast their eyes on the fascinating images and enjoy the exotic flavor of faraway places to their heart's content. Movie, as a unique means of culture carrier and an integral mode of art as well, can better reflect the attitudes, ideas and those tangible phrases of people's daily life of a given society in such an information age. In this regard, movie hence can be viewed as being playing a significant role in information communication as well as intercultural exchange in the modern world. Therefore, on the one hand, movie subtitling, "with the development of readily-available, cost-effective services to reach international audiences and markets" (Hajmohammadi, 2005:1), is bound to have a huge impact on modern communication. On the other hand, the advanced modern technology, especially with the arrival of the digital age, serves a strong and firm technological base for practical subtitling operation, thus displaying to it a promising prospect.

2.2 Subtitling as Purposeful Cross-cultural Communication

Nida (2004: VII) announced that "translating is essentially a process of communication" Similar ideas are frequently found in others: "Like any other use of language, translation can be considered an act of interpersonal communication. The translated text is the means by which the communication is made possible" (Karamitroglou, 2000:67) and "Translation is increasingly being regarded as a complex transaction that takes place in a communicative, socio-cultural context where active human agents are constantly involved." (Hermans, 1996:26, cit.in Karamitroglou, 2000:34) Meanwhile "Nord (1991b:7) views translation as a process of intercultural communication which involves two distinct parts: that of ST (source

text) production in a source communicative situation, and that of TT (target text) production in a target communicative situation. (Cit. in Karamitroglou, 2000:68) And Gutt (2004:211& 213) even goes so far as to declare that "translation—in the primary sense—is an act of communication,… a communication between translator and target audience only". Seeing in this regard, it could be said that audiovisual translation is "an unusual type of communicative interaction" (Karamitroglou, 2000:67) in view of its special traits that "it employs target linguistic signals to accompany other source aural and visual semiotic elements". (Ibid) Thus, compared with other text types, audiovisual ones are equipped with double channels to work in concert with each other for fulfilling the communicative goal. Interlingual subtitling constantly involves a transfer from source-language into target-language codes and at the same time a switch from spoken mode into written one. The impact it has during the process of cross-cultural communication is way tremendous. As Karamitroglou (2000:77-78) observes: "The broad appeal of audiovisual media (TV, cinema, video) for the public implies that the translated versions of imported audiovisual products will be addressing a large percentage of the target community, compared to other modes of literary translation (e.g. written translation), especially in countries with no significant original audiovisual production. The fact that television has become a part of our daily life shows the impact that TV productions – at least – have on our personalities. Daily quotes or catchphrases often come from popular films and advertisements. Instead of staying in and reading a book, one is now more likely to go to the movies or watch videotape. Therefore, it is not just the text (as a product) or its accompanying audiovisual medium (as the message carrier) that people have lately acquired but a whole new social ritual." Considering in this respect, movies are designed to be both entertaining and instructive, reaching out to other cultures to inform and invite reactions. Hence, subtitles assume great responsibilities in cultural transmission and communication.

While another reason to count subtitling as a type of communication is for its essential component: movie dialogues, which itself is an important form of interpersonal communication. It is through these dialogues that different relationships

between various characters are negotiated and constructed, unique personalities are portrayed and the image story is steered forward. Since dialogues occupy so prominent a position in a movie, it is thus reasonable to analyze subtitled text in view of a communicative form. At the first glance, movie dialogues impress upon people as if they were real life conversations. Nevertheless, a further survey may disclose their variance. Unlike daily utterances which are said to be heard or responded to, movie dialogues have gone through a more complicated procedure: from a well-written script to the actor's mouth and then to the viewer's ear. Thus, they possess some fundamentally different features through the process of a meticulous preparation. As Kozloff (2000) states that "although the words appear to be spontaneous every day speech, they form a carefully crafted work by an author who probably wrote and re-wrote the parts. These were then rehearsed and performed by actors and finally edited and mixed with the rest of the soundtrack". (Cit. in Schwarz, 2002:2-3) So in a certain sense, movie dialogues are created through the racking of brains rather than naturally uttered in everyday situation.

2.3 Main Features of Screen Language

The language used in movie is a sort of artistic language that is well thought of and put down after some painstaking job. It serves informational as well as esthetic functions in its own right. But compared to other serious literature, the screen speaks its own fresh language.

2.3.1 Colloquial Style

Since dialogues are basic components of a movie script, the screen language is generally of a colloquial style, featuring simple words and compact sentences. For example:

Brock: This better be good. (*Titanic*)[1]

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[1] Except for some one otherwise indicated, the subtitled examples in this thesis come from the book

布洛克：不要是什么坏事。(《泰坦尼克号》) (Cit. in 周婵 (上), 2001:5)

Gump: Stupid is as stupid does. (*Forrest Gump*)

阿甘：蠢人就做蠢事。(《阿甘正传》) (Ibid (上): 167)

2.3.2 Idiolect

"The main purpose of translating a play is normally to have it performed successfully." (Newmark, 2001b:172) This is also the case of movie subtitling. Movies are a coordinated artistic work among various actors and actresses who are individually characterized and who belong to different social strata. Therefore the lines of different characters, accordingly, present various language styles. When the subtitler works on a movie translation, s/he must have a careful think-over on these diversified idiolects and try to assign them personalized renderings in accordance with their styles. Below is an example in the movie *Gone with the Wind*, in which the lines of the heroine are well characterized.

Scarlett: As God as my witness...as God as my witness they're not going to lick me. I'm going to live through this and when it's all over, I'll never be hungry again. No, nor any of my folk. If I have to lie, to steal, cheat, or kill, as God as my witness, I'll never be hungry again. (*Gone with the Wind*)

思嘉：让上帝做见证，上帝做见证。我是不会屈服的，我要渡过这难关。战争结束后，我再也不要挨饿了。不要，我的家人也不要。即使让我去撒谎，去偷，去骗，去杀人，上帝作证，我也不要再挨饿。(《乱世佳人》) (Ibid (上): 228)

Comprehensive Englsih Moive Scripts (《英文经典电影脚本汇编》(上、下册)) edited by 周婵, 2001, and they are hence being referred to as Ibid (上/下): Page.

2.3.3 Acousticity

Dissimilar to the written words in printed literature, movie dialogues are heard rather than read. Thus, screen language is an acoustic language that is intended to please the viewer's ears.

2.3.4 Transiency

Movie images are going on in a continuous flow, so is the language spoken by different characters. People reading written literary works may repeat the process as many times at will, however, with movie, the words heard are "forever gone" and the viewers have no second chance to go over them once again. As a result, watching a movie demands more energy and efforts from the viewers for a "speech only partially heard through inattention cannot be heard again" (胡壮麟, 2001:308) This explains why the language of the subtitles needs to be more concise and easily comprehensible.

2.3.5 Synchronization

Movie speaks in a "language of scenes": its flowing and sparkling stream of images, its compelling pace and natural rhythms, as well as its pictorial style are all essential of this nonverbal language, which constitute the basic means of movie communication. Like glimmering pearls, they are threaded by the dialogues on a single line. People enjoy watching a movie while listening to the characters talking. Thus, another important quality of screen language: synchronization between the flowing image and the speaking language. And in order to achieve the desired effect, some condensation measures are a must. For example, instead of translating "He came from D.P.R.K." into "他来自朝鲜民主主义人民共和国", a most usual way is to have it rendered into "他是来自朝鲜的".(Cit. in 钱绍昌，2000：63)   Although this special trait of screen language from time to time puts the subtitler in fetters, it also on occasion earns them some support. So when subtitling a movie, the subtilter should put more consideration on this respect. One example in the movie *Forrest Gump* fully illustrates how the

subtitler can take full advantage of this specialty.

> Principal: I want to show you something, Mrs. Gump. Now <u>this</u> is normal.
>
> Forrest is right <u>here</u>. The state requires a minimum IQ of 80 to attend public
>
> school, Mrs. Gump. He's going to have to go to a special school. And he'll be
>
> just fine. (*Forrest Gump*)
>
> 校长：甘普太太，我给你看些东西。你看，这是正常的。福勒斯特是在这
>
> 儿。州政府规定智商至少要有 80 才可以读公立学校。甘普太太，他得去
>
> 一所特殊学校。那样，才比较适合。(《阿甘正传》) (Ibid (上): 165)

With the combination of image and action on the screen, the audience cannot be at a loss about the referential meaning of "this" and "here".

3. Context

3.1 Concept of Context

The term "context" is a large concept and may acquire a wide range of connotations in various situations. By and large, it refers to "the continually changing surroundings, in the widest sense, that enable the participant their interaction become intelligible". (Mey, 2001:39) The concept is largely employed in the studies of text-linguistics and pragmatics. According to different understandings s in the communicative process to interact, and in which the linguistic expressions of, it can be further divided into several sub-categories. The British linguist Malinowski (1923) views context as composed of "context of culture" and "context of situation"; Dutch Linguist Dijk sees context as language environment, the actual condition when speech acts take place, and culture, society and politics; Within the systemic-functional grammar, context comprises three parts: field, tenor and mode; and the Chinese linguist Zhang Zhigong (1982) classifies context into real-life language context and language context in the wide sense. (白解红，2000: 18－19) However, the concept of context acquires quite a seemingly disparate perspective in relevance theory where it is being looked upon as something mentally constructed rather than the externally produced: "Hence in

relevance theory context does not refer to some part of the external environment of the communication partners, be it the text preceding or following an utterance, situational circumstances, cultural factors, etc.; it rather refers to part of their 'assumptions about the world' or cognitive environments, as it is called."(Gutt, 2000: 27) Nevertheless, this brand-new viewing angle does not contradict the conventional ones radically, for whatever mental assumptions people are able to construct during the communicating process, they must be in some way born out of or stimulated by the external resources. Thus, it is pretty reasonable to try to accommodate these seemingly divergent ideas within the discussion of movie subtitling, a communicative genre that should pay special attention to the viewer's mental activities.

3.2 Contexts in Movie Subtitling

As the previous analysis indicates, subtitling is a form of cross-cultural communication. And compared with other text types, this one is unique in that it is equipped with double channels to work in concert with each other for fulfilling the communicative goal: Interlingual subtitling constantly involves a switch from source-language into target-language codes and meanwhile a transfer from source-language culture to target-language culture. In this process of cross-cultural communicating, contexts of both source-text and target audience are sure to effect great impact on the act of subtitling.

Of the context in screen translation, Li Yan has done some research into script-internal and script-external factors. (李燕， 2004: 444—456) In her essay, she sub-categorizes script-internal factors into linguistic knowledge, context of situation and context of culture, and script-external factors into visual and auditory elements. While her discussion may apply on the whole to audiovisual translation, the present thesis is going to concentrate on the context of subtitling as a special text type which will certainly be distinct in some respects. Based on the three basics: linguistic context, context of culture and context of situation, the thesis incorporates a fourth context into the discussion: the viewer's internal context. It will examine how these different

contexts are varied from and interrelated to each other, and how they affect specific subtitling decisions. For the first three context types, the discussion is restricted to source-text and source culture while the target viewers' internal context is understood within target-culture.

3.2.1 Linguistic Context

Linguistic context, which is also called co-text, includes the sounds, words or phrases preceding and/or following a particular linguistic item in an utterance. (Hatim, *Discourse and the Translator*. 2001:215) In subtitling movie dialogues, the subtitler must have a good command of source-language in order to acquire a thorough understanding of the original message; on the other hand, s/he should also be competent in target language so as to work out a satisfactory version for the target viewers. Sometimes, a correct understanding of the same word in different circumstances can be of vital importance. Take the common word "good" for instance. Its out-of-context meaning is accessible to English beginners, but different situations can entail the understandings varied.

Schindler: Well, I'm a German. All right, you've done it. A good company, you think.
(*Schindler's List*)

Stern: Modestly successful!
辛德勒：对，我是德国人。好了，你交代完毕了。你觉得那公司能赚钱吗？
斯坦：还算过得去吧！（《辛德勒的名单》）(Cit. in 李燕, 2004:448)

Stern: You stand in the line or there, but there is no good. (*Schindler's List*)
斯坦：你在这排或在那排，都毫无意义。（《辛德勒的名单》）
(Cit. in 李燕, 2004:448)

Goeth: You want to stay where you are. You've got things going on the side, things are good, you don't want anybody telling you what to do—I can understand all that,

didn't I? (*Schindler's List*)

歌特：你想保持现在状态。你已经开始暗地里干起来了，从中可以<u>捞一笔</u>，你不想任何人对你指手划脚。这些我都能理解，是不是？（《辛德勒的名单》）

(Cit. in 李燕, 2004:449)

Mr. Robinson: That's a hell of a <u>good</u> age to be. (*The Graduate*)

罗宾逊先生：正是<u>青春年少，大有作为</u>的年纪。（《毕业生》）(Ibid (上): 83)

Benjamin: He certainly is a <u>good</u> walker. (*The Graduate*)

本杰明：他可真是<u>风度翩翩</u>。(Ibid (上): 101)

Darcy: But that was what she liked. People flatter her so much she enjoys an occasional change.

Lizzy: I'm afraid I gave her a <u>good</u> change this afternoon. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

达西：她就是喜欢那一点。她听到奉承话太多勒，偶尔也喜欢换换口味。

丽茜：恐怕我下午是让她尝到了<u>好滋味</u>。（《傲慢与偏见》）(Cit. in 李燕, 2004:449)

Rose: Don't artists need <u>good</u> light? (*Titanic*)

露丝：艺术家不需要<u>足够的</u>光线？（《泰坦尼克号》）(Ibid (上): 33)

Molly: Well, Jack, it sounds like you're a <u>good</u> man to have around in a sticky spot. Why do they always insist on announcing dinner like a damn cavalry charge? (*Titanic*)

莫莉：唉，杰克，你像个<u>临危不惧的</u>任务。为什么一吃饭他们就要吹这种号角，像是要冲锋陷阵一样。（《泰坦尼克号》）(Ibid (上): 23)

The above illustrations demonstrate that linguist context is an important factor that should be taken into account; a correct understanding and an appropriate rendering of the original text is a must on the part of the subtitler, otherwise it will be misleading or cost the viewers too much energy in processing the information. The varied

renderings of "good" in different contexts are appropriate in that they could generate stronger contextual effects because the specific descriptive words used in the Chinese subtitles contain more information than simply having it rendered into "好". Here are some other examples in which common words take on unusual meanings.

Old Rose: It is me, dear. Wasn't I a dish? (*Titanic*)

老露丝：是我，亲爱的。我当时是不是很漂亮？（《泰坦尼克号》）(Ibid (上): 6)

Jack: Rose, you're no picnic. All right, you're a spoiled little brat even, but under that you're the most amazingly astoundingly wonderful girl-woman-I've ever known and... (*Titanic*)

杰克：露丝，你脾气不好，你知道吗？给宠坏了。但你是一个内心具有高尚品格的美丽女孩—女人—是我从未遇见过的...... （《泰坦尼克号》）(Ibid (上): 30)

Boy A: Took off in the middle of the night to get married.

Boy B: Yeah, probably one step ahead of a shotgun! (*The Graduate*)

男孩 A：半夜被人叫醒，离开这结婚去了。

男孩 B：说不定是被逼着结婚呢。（《毕业生》）(Ibid (上): 107)

Oliver's Father: What is it your people are in, Jeniffer? (*Love Story*)

奥利弗父亲：詹尼弗，你的父母是干什么的？（《爱情故事》）(Ibid (下): 281)

The above underlined words are by no means rare, but they acquire distinctively different meanings from under common situations, and should therefore be rendered carefully. If not so, viewers who begin the comprehension process with a false start will suffer a great loss of effort.

3.2.2 Context of Situation

"Communication takes place through a medium and in situations that are limited in time and space. Each specific situation determines what and how people

27

communicate, and it is changed by people communicating. Situations are not universal but are embedded in a cultural habitat, which in turn conditions the situation." (Nord, 2001:1) Context of situation is the physical environment of speech event inclusive of time, space, participants and subject matter etc.. (胡壮麟, 1994: 184) Generally speaking, it refers to "all those extra-linguistic factors which have some bearing on the text itself".(Halliday & Hasan, 2002:21)Within a movie discourse, the context of situation is embedded in the image story on the screen. And since movie story is an invention that bases on reality, the context of situation in a movie is not a real one but the one that is created out of real life situation. It is in this sense that Gregory (1967:192 cit. in Taylor, 2000:3) points out: "a film largely creates its own situation and patterns of contextual relations." Nonetheless, this does not hinder the subtitler's work much since immersed in such an imaginary world as screen, the audience will get so enticed that they would rather temporarily escape from the real world, and take what they see as the "reality". However, these extra-linguistic features of a movie will sometimes support or constrain the work of subtitling. In the discussion of drama translation, Susan Bassnett argues that "the written text is a functional component in the total process that comprises theatre and is characterized in ways that distinguish it from a written text designed to be read in its own right". (Bassnett 2004:120) Movie dialogues, if read alone, are "incomplete rather than a fully rounded unit" (Ibid: 119), She further quotes Jiří Levý(1967) in stating how important role the extra-linguistic elements play: "The relationship between the dialogue and the extra-linguistic situation is intense and reciprocal. The situation often provides the dialogue with its subject matter. Moreover, whatever the subject matter may be, the situation variously interferes in the dialogue, affects the way it unfolds, brings about shifts or reveals, and sometimes interrupts it altogether. In its turn, the dialogue progressively illuminates the situation and often modifies or even transforms it. The actual sense of the individual units of meaning depends as much on the extra-linguistic situation as on the linguistic context."(Ibid: 121) While this is also true of movie dialogues. Subtitles represent only a small, yet indispensable fragment of the original dialogue in that they track dialogues minus their

extra-linguistic features such as gender, age, social class etc. and paralinguistic features like the character's body language including eye movements, gestures, facial expression etc.. So it is only through a perfect combination of all these "auditive and visual signs" (Ibid: 130) that the subtitled text can come into full play. Therefore, in relation to movie subtitling, the subtitler "must hear the voice that speaks and take into account the 'gesture' of the language, the cadence rhythm and pauses that occur when the written text is spoken". (Ibid: 121) Situational contexts, if matched by appropriate subtitles, can be very rewarding and can provide the viewers with a most enjoyable experience. For example, at the beginning of the movie *Cast Away*, Chuck Noland, a FedEx Systems engineer is instructing the employees on time efficiency. He speaks at a fast pace with somewhat an intent expression on his face while adjusting the time on a clock.

> Chuck: Time rules over us without mercy, not carrying if we're healthy or ill, hungry
>
> or drunk, Russian, American, beings from Mars. It's like a fire. It could either destroy
>
> us or keep us warm. That's why every FedEx office has a clock, because we live or
>
> we die by the clock. We never turn our back on it. And we never, ever allow
>
> ourselves...the sin of losing track of time!
>
> Locally, it's 1:56. That means we've got three hours and four minutes...before the
>
> end-of-the-day's package sort. That's how long we have. That's how much time we
>
> have...before this pulsating, accursed, relentless taskmaster tries to put us out of
>
> business. (Cit. in the DVD *Cast Away*)

Seeing Chuck's swift action and perceiving his imperative tone, the viewer may get a vague idea that he is pressing the staff for some urgent task. This situational information provided by the moving image on the screen thus should contribute to a condensed rendering which corresponds with Chuck's fast speed of talking; otherwise a lengthy word-by-word subtitle will definitely halt the viewer's image reading, resulting in greater information loss.

In movie subtitling, the situational context counts as something very significant not

only because it is an important information channel, but also for the deep reason lying behind each act of viewing: Movie-viewers go to cinemas or sit in front of TVs to watch, not to read. Considering in this respect, good subtitles should try the utmost to cater to their prime desire in seeing the story in action. Hence, the subtitler assumes a responsibility for creating adequate relevance between the moving image and the written subtitles.

3.2.3 Context of Culture

Among the numerous definitions assigned to culture, the American ethnologist Ward H. Goodenough' explanation may be counted as the most inclusive one: A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative sense of the term. ... Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. (Goodenough, 1964: 36, cit. in Nord, 2001:23-24) Göhring (1978) also defines culture as "what one has to know, master or feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behaviour shown by members of a community in their various roles conforms to general expectations, and in order to behave in this community in accordance with general expectations unless one is prepared to bear the consequences of unaccepted behaviour. (Cit. in Nord, 2001:33) In light of this respect, culture is "the totality of beliefs and practices of a society" (Nida, 2001:78) that distinguishes from those of others. Thus in cross-cultural communication, cultural differences may set up barriers that are pretty difficult or even insurmountable for people who are communicating. On the other hand, Language is regarded as "a substantial but partial reflection of a culture". (Newmark 1991:73, cit. in 李运兴, 2000: 118) It is shaping and in turn is being

shaped by culture; it constitutes an indispensable part "for both the functioning and perpetuation of the culture". (Nida, 2001:139) Hence, translating in a certain sense means comparing cultures. And Nida (Ibid: 82) once claims that "for truly successful translating, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function". As a key element in movie, screen language is thus a more direct reflection of a culture, for it can appropriately and sufficiently convey cultural connotations and culture-specific messages.

Moreover, since "any translated text must function within a specific communicative situation (Baker, 2004:245)" and as mentioned above, "situations are not universal but are embedded in a cultural habitat, which in turn conditions the situation (Nord, 2001:1)", communication is thus "conditioned by the constraints of the situation-in-culture". (Ibid) The characters on the screen belong to a distinct cultural environment: their language, behavior, mode of thinking and way of life are good representations of the culture that is unique to the community in which they live. Subtitling is a form of cross-cultural communication between the source culture in which the original movie is produced and the target culture in which the target viewers are born and brought up, thus a distinct cultural context the viewers are immersed in when watching a foreign movie. As different cultures entail different modalities of perception on people, this may on occasion impede target viewer's understanding of the movie. Such exotic cultural elements as in another culture usually find their way into linguistic expressions like culture-specific items and culture images. The following are some typical examples:

Ruth: And where exactly do you live, Mr. Dawson? (*Titanic*)

Jack: Well, right now my address is the RMS Titanic. After that, I'm on <u>God's good humor</u>.

鲁斯：你究竟住在什么地方，唐逊先生？

杰克：目前我的地址是铁达尼号，这以后，我要看<u>上帝的安排</u>了。《泰坦尼克号》(Ibid (上): 26)

Mr. Earnshaw: Don't look so shocked Ellen, he's going to live with us for a while. Give him a good scrubbing and put some <u>Christian clothes</u> on him. (*Wuthering Heights*)

恩萧先生：不要这样大惊小怪的，艾伦，他会和我们住上一阵呢。把他好好洗刷一下，再给他换套<u>好衣</u>服。(《呼啸山庄》) (Ibid (下): 308)

Ellen: Food is what he needs most from the looks of him Mr. Earnshaw. He's <u>as thin as a sparrow</u>. Come into the kitchen, child. (*Wuthering Heights*)

艾伦：恩萧先生，看他这样子，还是先吃点东西好，他<u>瘦得像根杆</u>。到厨房来吧，孩子。 (《呼啸山庄》) (Ibid (下): 308)

Mr. Earnshaw: Oh no, children, no. This is Hindley's violin. One of the best in Liverpool. Mm, fine tone. And a bow to go with it. There you are <u>Paganini</u>. (*Wuthering Heights*)

恩萧先生：噢，不，孩子们，不要这样。这是辛德利的小提琴，是利物浦最好的一把。唔，音色很好，还配有一把弓呢。给你，<u>帕格尼尼</u>。(《呼啸山庄》) (Ibid (下): 309)

Scarlett: I'm scared to death, and if you had the sense of a <u>goat</u> you'd scared, too! Oh, the Yankees! (*Gone with the Wind*)

思嘉：我吓得要死勒。你就是<u>木得像头驴</u>，也该觉得害怕。噢，北佬！(《乱世佳人》) (Ibid (上): 221)

Jane: Oh Lizzy, Mr. Bingley's going to arrange a <u>highland reel</u> for us, come along. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

简：噢，丽茜，宾利先生要开<u>苏格兰双人舞会</u>呢，来啊。(《傲慢与偏见》) (Ibid (上): 361)

Lydia: Hello, Lizzy. Hello, Mr. Darcy. She's <u>as drunk as a horse</u>. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

莉迪亚：你好，丽茜。你好，达西先生。瞧她醉醺醺的样子。(《傲慢与偏见》)

(Ibid (上): 362)

Lizzy: Yes mama, I know, I know <u>as abrupt as bird's feathers</u>. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

丽茜：是的，妈妈，我知道。我知道这事来得<u>太突然了</u>。(《傲慢与偏见》)

(Ibid (上): 370)

Mary: It's against the principals of <u>Magna Carta</u>. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

玛丽：这是<u>违法</u>的。(《傲慢与偏见》) (Ibid (上): 364)

Red: There must be a con like me in every prison in America. I'm the guy who can get it for. Cigarettes, a bag of reefer, , it that's your thing...bottle of brandy, to celebrate your kid's high school graduation. Damn near anything within reason. Yes, sir! I'm a regular <u>Sears and Roebuck</u>. So when Andy Dufresne came to me in 1949...and asked me to smuggle <u>Rita Hayworth</u> into the prison for him... I told him, "No problem."
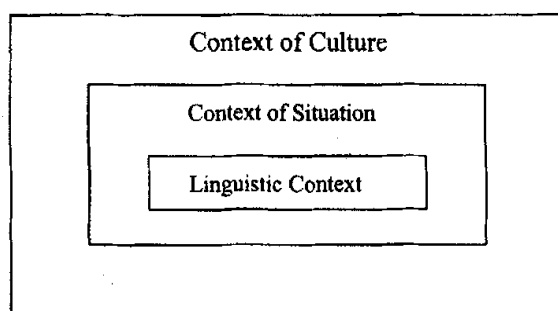
瑞德：美国各监狱少不了像我这种人，我什么都弄得到。香烟啦，大麻啦，家有喜事想喝白兰地也行。是的，我就像<u>邮购公司</u>。1949 年，安迪·杜弗伦要我把<u>丽泰·海华斯</u>弄给他，我只说"没问题"。(《肖申克的救赎》)

(Cit. in DVD *The Shawshank Redemption*)

Culture is such an inclusive concept that consists of "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". (Lusting and Koester, 1999, cit. in 常宗林, 2004:21) It shapes and binds one's social and cognitive concepts which are not likely to be understood and appreciated by outsiders. Movie is a comprehensive art form that may serve as a mirror for one specific culture of a country or a community. For people who have less direct contact with foreign cultures, watching movies can be a most convenient and effective means of getting to know anther culture and its people. But sometimes, culture-specific words and unique culture images pose great problems for the subtitler:

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On the one hand, they shoulder heavy responsibility of cultural transmission, and on the other hand, they must make the subtitle reading an easy and delightful enjoyment for the viewers. Thus, how to get foreign cultures across to the Chinese audience and meanwhile do not lay big burden on their mind while they enjoy the movie becomes an arduous task that the subtitler must be struggling to complete. One way to resolve the problem is to take the viewers' cognitive abilities into account and try to create versions that are adequate for their quick comprehension. The examples listed above are by no means exhaustive, but only a fragmentary representation showing that cultural context is a significant aspect in movie. The translation of such cultural elements will be discussed later with regard to the viewers' cognitive ability.

Of the three types of context mentioned above, they are interrelated and overlapping with each other in some way and their position and relationship are displayed in the following illustration:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Context of Culture               │
│   ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐    │
│   │        Context of Situation          │    │
│   │   ┌─────────────────────────────┐    │    │
│   │   │      Linguistic Context      │    │    │
│   │   └─────────────────────────────┘    │    │
│   └─────────────────────────────────────┘    │
│                                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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With cultural context being the largest concept, situational context and linguistic context are in a way inclusive in it; they are determined by a given culture and serve as important reflections of that culture. In a foreign movie, all these contexts have great bearing on the subtitling work and the subtitler has to pay close attention to their specific representations.

3.2.4 Viewers' Internal Context

Context is a key notion in relevance theory, which maintains that "communication not only requires encoding, transfer and decoding processes, but crucially involves inference in addition. (Gutt, 2001: 41) "A context is a psychological construct, a

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subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world" and "it is these assumptions …

rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance".

(Sperber & Wilson, 2001:15) Within the realm of relevance theory, context thus

becomes "a very wide notion that can include virtually any phenomenon entertainable

by the human mind". (Gutt, 2001:42) As Sperber and Wilson (2001:15-16) state: "A

context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate environment or

the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific

hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions,

beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation."

Moreover the context used in interpreting the utterances is not given but chosen; it is a

dynamic concept to the contrary of a static one. Movie subtitling, if viewed as a

communicative action between the original movie and the target audience, then the

internal context of the target viewers certainly has to be taken into full consideration:

their mutual knowledge with the source-language audience, their cultural beliefs and

assumptions about the characters' intentions, their general cognitive environments and

demands as well as their processing efforts are all factors that sway the subtitling act

in one way or another.

4. Subtitling: Context and Relevance

"Translation is displaced and disjoined communication." (Neubert, 1992: 10 cit. in 李

运兴, 2000: 112) Speaking of interlingual subtitling, the case is more complicated as

it intends to communicate spoken (written) words in a somewhat

technically-constrained written form added to the original movie. Since any

source-text (original movie) is usually composed for a situation in the source culture,

thus for a successful communication to be carried out between the original movie and

the target viewers, it is quite essential that certain adequate relevance be created

between contexts of the source-text and the target viewers. On account of a generally

acknowledged fact that "human cognition is relevance-oriented" (Sperber & Wilsoon,

2001: 46) and "information processing involves effort", therefore "it will only be

undertaken in the expectation of some reward" and "there is thus no point in drawing

someone's attention to a phenomenon unless it will seem relevant enough to him to be

worth his attention". (Ibid: 49) In light of this, subtitling then must be first and foremost relevant enough for the target viewers to make adequately context-based interpretations of the information in the movie. Otherwise, it will be most likely that subtitles fail to fulfill its role.

4.1 Subtitling Viewership

"Willingly or unwillingly, we all become everyday recipients of a massive amount of literary material which nowadays, because of the impact of audiovisual media, is primarily of audiovisual nature." (Karamitroglou, 2000: 76) The statement points out the fact that the prime goal of an audiovisual product is to cater for the large populace. It is not hard to imagine the miserable fate of a poorly produced movie. Compared to other forms of translation, subtitles may reach very different audiences: There are multi-lingual viewers who do not need translation and at the other extreme, there are some with no understanding of the source; in between are viewers who need some help following the narrative. Nowadays, there appears a widespread enthusiasm for subtitling for more and more people would like to view their favorite foreign movies in original and subtitled ones best cater to their needs as they can preserve the authenticity of a movie. Thus, for a much acclaimed subtitled movie, the expectations of its target viewers cannot afford to be ignored. However, it is not only practical but also improbable to fulfill the expectations of all viewers. Nonetheless, to make a general survey of the common interests and to do thorough research on some concerned mental activities of the target viewers at large will certainly prove to be both rewarding and aiding in the subtitling practice.

It is generally assumed that during the process of communicating "people have intuitions of relevance: that they can consistently distinguish relevant information from irrelevant information, or in some cases, more relevant from less relevant information" and these "intuitions of relevance are relative to contexts". (Sperber & Wilson, 2001:119) Moreover, people are naturally inclined to an optimization in communicating, that is they tend to "keep the effort spent to a minimum" (Gutt,

2000:28) As a result, in watching a movie the viewer always, like in other forms of communicating, surreptitiously entertains a hope that reading the subtitles won't lay much burden on their mentality and that the subtiltes can actually convey the most relevant information adequate for their comprehension. Thus the principle of relevance is to have large impact on the actual decision making in subtitling, for which we will further discuss in details.
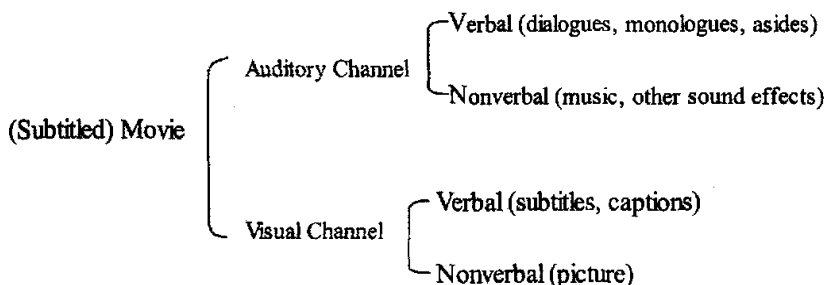
4.2 Subtitle Reading: Dual Demands

Unlike reading those written literary works which only "require readers to focus on the visual signs to interpret the verbal content signified and explore meaning" (Hajmohammadi, 2005:2), subtitle reading "entails more varied cognitive activities in decoding segments of the image and connecting these segments to the overall discourse woven into the audiovisual structure of the film". (Ibid) The main reasons lying behind this rather energy consuming mental activity are: On the one hand, subtitles are a verbal text superimposed upon the lower part of the screen. On the whole, it doesn't do so much harm as to destroy the integrity of the original picture; however, it does in one way or another sway some influence on the viewers' perception and intrude upon their image reading as it is the fact that the viewers have to "divide visual attention between subtitles and image". (Ibid: 4) Still on the other hand, subtitle reading forces a time constraint on the viewer since "filmic material is presented in a continuous flow over which they have no control, requiring constant attention". (Ibid: 2) For the above mentioned which are but too obvious facts, it is no difficult to see that to watch a subtitled movie usually demands much greater effort from the viewers to harmonize a variety of mental activities in a condensed period of time. And this also can make good explanations why subtitles should by nature be concise and uncomplicated, and that there is an inevitable information loss in the process of watching a subtitled movie. How to resolve such problems as the contradiction between the non-verbal image reading and the verbal sign interpretation, and how to keep the information loss to a minimum will find an answer on the what

function the subtitles can actually serve.

4.3 The Function of Subtitles

Within the functionalist theory, the term "function" is differentiated from "intention", with the former one viewed from the standpoint of text receivers. "In accordance with the model of text-bound interaction, the receivers use the text with a certain function, depending on their own expectations, needs, previous knowledge and situational conditions."(Nord, 2001:28) In discussing the function of movie subtitles, this definition also applies because the movie viewer are the text receiver under this situation.

Commonly, a movie is a multi-channeled communication form, relying on verbal, visual and audio modes to work simultaneously. For a subtitled foreign movie, it mainly consists of the following elements:

(Subtitled) Movie
- Auditory Channel
  - Verbal (dialogues, monologues, asides)
  - Nonverbal (music, other sound effects)
- Visual Channel
  - Verbal (subtitles, captions)
  - Nonverbal (picture)

"Any translated text must function within a specific communicative situation (Baker, 2004:245)" and "the translation of the textual/linguistic part of an audiovisual product is determined by the function of the particular film-type, namely whether it is intended to entertain its recipients, inform its recipients or promote a commercial product. In addition, it is determined by the emphasis it puts on the visual-and-aural elements vs. the textual/linguistic ones, namely whether in the particular audiovisual production it is the people/action or the language/dialogues that are central (Karamitroglou, 2000:79)". The above illustration shows, in a subtitled movie, that subtitles function in an environment complementary to several other visual or auditory resources. Subtitles are a verbal text sign superimposed on the original picture. Therefore, many researchers within the field contend that such an act

(subtitling) brings about a destruction of the completeness and the smooth flow of the beautiful pictures, thus "leading to imperfect perception of the image that is the core component of the film". (Hajmohammadi, 2005:4) Besides, "subtitles (verbal visual signs) interfere with the perception of the non-verbal visual signs, making dual demands on viewers who have to divide visual attention between subtitles and image" and therefore "it is not possible to keep full track of both". (Ibid) While it is the truth that subtitle reading does in a way involve certain information loss, it can by no means be dismissed as useless so long as it is wielded carefully and appropriately.

By and large, a basic function of subtitles is to offer adequate information about what is going along on the screen, carrying out a smooth communication between the movie and the target viewers. Nevertheless, an ideal subtitle is designed to be such a one that "gives the target audience the experience they would have if they already knew the foreign language". (Gottlieb, 1994:265, cit. in Taylor, 2000:1) While this ideal goal could rarely, if ever, be achieved in practice, at least some measures can be carried out to optimize the situation, making things easier for the viewers. As the *Skopostheorie* holds that "the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (*Skopos*) of the overall translational action. (Nord, 2001:27) One basic aspect of *skopostheorie* maintains that the receiver/addressee as the main factor determining the target-text Skopos. (Ibid: 29) Movie subtitling, in which the target viewers are counted as a decisive factor, falls within this realm. Hence, the main purposes of this translational action lies with how to achieve the best effect among the target viewers and try to offer them the similar esthetic experience as the source language audience would have when they watch the movie. Under this guiding principle, subtitles assume an important function: to establish an "optimal relevance" between the movie in original and target viewers. Only in this way can the target viewers acquire enough and adequate information for the appreciation of the movie, and at the same time, the processing efforts they spend would be kept to a minimum.

4.3.1 Optimal Relevance

Optimal relevance describes a most ideal state in the communicating process between the communicator and the addressee. "An utterance is optimally relevant (a) when it enables the audience to find without unnecessary effort the meaning intended by the communicator and (b) when that intended meaning is worth the audience's effort, that is, when it provides adequate benefits to the audience. These benefits are psychological in nature; they consist in modifications of a person's knowledge and referred to technically as 'positive contextual effects'." (Gutt, 2001:43) The function of optimal relevance is thought to be central to the success of communication. Considering in this regard, the first and foremost task for the subtitler is try to establish an optimal relevance between the contexts of source-text and target viewers so that the viewers could get most from reading subtitles while watching images.

4.3.2 Conditions for Optimal Relevance

"Human beings are efficient information-processing devices." (Sperber & Wilson, 2001: 46) In other words, all human beings, whether they are aware of it or not, automatically aim at the most efficient information processing possible. While it is the truth, this efficiency in communication process is most characterized by a permanent pursuit for an optimal relevance of the information being processed. Since relevance is a comparative notion depending on the interplay of two factors: contextual effects and processing effort. Other things being equal, the more contextual effects are produced, the more relevant; and the less efforts are taken, the more relevant. Optimal relevance thus consists in an expectation of interpretation that yields adequate contextual effects at minimal processing effort. Such expectation works on both sides of the communication: On one hand, for anyone wishes to communicate, s/he implicitly and automatically conveys the assumption that the hearer can expect to derive adequate contextual effects without spending unnecessary effort; on the other hand, the addressee has the right to assume that the first interpretation s/he arrives at that a rational speaker might have expected (a) to yield adequate contextual effects,

and (b) to put the hearer to no unjustifiable processing effort in obtaining those effects is the interpretation intended by the communicator. (Gutt, 2004: 32) In brief, "every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance." (Sperber & Wilson, 2001: 158)

While for subtitling, such an optimal relevance is most desirable as reading subtitles is in itself a much demanding task. The viewers' attention has to sway between moving images and written words, processing the given information within a time constraint. If the information provided does not turn out to be the most relevant, an extra cost of processing effort will inevitably add to the burden of the viewers's mind, leading to a greater information loss in image reading. As a result, the subtilter must take into account the two major factors in evaluating the degree of relevance. In effect, during the communication which is "an asymmetrical process", the responsibility lies largely with the communicator than the audience, then "it is left to the communicator to make correct assumptions about the codes and contextual information that the audience will have accessible and be likely to use in the comprehension process. The responsibility for avoiding misunderstanding also lies with the speaker, so that all the hearer has to do is go ahead and use whatever code and contextual information come most easily to hand". (Ibid: 43)

4.3.2.1 Contextual Effect

The notion of context in relevance theory is also referred to as contextual assumption, which is "a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world". (Ibid: 15) A significant aspect of optimization maintains that "human beings have a natural interest in improving their understanding of the world around them" (Gutt, 2004: 28), and as a result of this interest, they always bear an expectation that the outcome of a communication act will modify some previously held assumptions. The modification of the old assumptions is referred to as contextual effect, which is vital to the success of communication for having some contextual effect in a context is an essential condition for relevance. Three types of contextual effects can be traced: the derivation

of contextual implications, the strengthening, or confirmation of assumptions already held, or the elimination of assumptions due to a contradiction. Thus, in the act of subtitling, it is essential that the subtitled texts have contextual effects on the part of the viewers under certain context, otherwise, relevance cannot be achieved, and other things being equal, the greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance. What's more, the relevance between the written subtitles and the visual images cannot be ignored for information from image reading always work in concert to provide supportive information for the viewers. In effect, when watching a subtitled movie, all information "that can be perceived in the physical environment, information that can be retrieved from memory — in itself a vast store of information, including information derived from preceding utterances plus any cultural or other knowledge stored there — and further information that can be inferred from these two sources"(Gutt, 2004: 27)constitutes the viewers' cognitive environment, which in turn serves as the potential context of an utterance. However, one crucial point for a successful communication to be carried out still lies in how the viewers "manage to select the actual, speaker-intended assumptions from among all the assumptions they could use from their cognitive environment". (Ibid) Take a simple utterance "That's it" as an illustration. Its out-of-context meaning is perhaps comprehensible to any English learner. However, when put into various situational contexts of the movie, different renderings are required in order that the viewers could find it adequately relevant. The following are some examples taken from originals:

Chuck: So, that's it.
查克：仁至义尽了。(《荒岛余生》) (Cit. in DVD *Cast Away*)

Hartley: Right, that's it then. (*Titanic*)
哈特利：好，奏完了。(《泰坦尼克号》) (Ibid (上): 63)

Max: That's it! That's Manderley! (*Rebecca*)
麦克西姆：到了，这就是曼德丽。(《蝴蝶梦》) (Ibid (上): 395)

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For the same utterance "That's it" to have contextual effects on Chinese viewers, a simple rendering "那就是了" certainly won't do. Thus the different situations in which they appear have a bearing on the actual decision making. In the first case, the situational context is set after an air crash. Chuck, the only survivor, was washed onto an isolated island where he found his colleague Albert's dead body in the sea. Chuck buried Albert in the sand, and then with a helpless shrug, he said "That's it". If the utterance is just translated into "就这样了", the viewers can still get the meaning. But considering the situational contexts: the helpless expression on Chuck's face and his shrugging gesture, the Chinese viewers may assume that Chuck himself is now in a dilemma, all he can do for his colleague is done, then the rendering "仁至义尽了" probably holds a larger contextual effect on the Chinese viewers in that it strengthens their assumption. In the second and third ones, the situational contexts have altered, so have their translations. These examples show that in movie subtitling where the situational context plays an important role, it is natural that subtitles which harmonize image information with verbal utterances get better hand in creating adequate relevance for the target viewers.

Speaking of the translation of cultural elements in movie, the viewers' cognitive context takes a special bearing. The Chinese audiences are born in a culture that is distinct from Western culture in numerous ways. Although the abundant activities for cultural exchange are carried between China and many western countries, large areas of culture-specificity still remains unknown to the Chinese people. Hence, it is quite necessary that the subtitler make sufficient estimation of the viewers' cognitive ability and the contextual assumptions they have access.

Religion has had a lasting influence throughout human history. Both Western and Eastern people have varying religious beliefs that are part of their respective cultures. Let us take a look at several examples, some of which are re-cited:

Ruth: And where exactly do you live, Mr. Dawson?

Jack: Well, right now my address is the RMS Titanic. After that, I'm on God's good

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humor. (*Titanic*)

鲁斯：你究竟住在什么地方，唐逊先生？

杰克：目前我的地址是铁达尼号，这以后，我要看<u>上帝的安排</u>了。(《泰坦尼克号》)

(Ibid (上): 26)

Mr. Earnshaw: Don't look so shocked Ellen, he's going to live with us for a while. Give him a good scrubbing and put some <u>Christian clothes</u> on him. (*Wuthering Heights*)

恩萧先生：不要这样大惊小怪的，艾伦，他会和我们住上一阵呢。把他好好洗刷一下，再给他换套<u>好衣</u>服。(《呼啸山庄》) (Ibid (下): 309)

Mr. Brocklehurst: Pupils! Observe this child. She is yet young. She possesses the oridinary form of girlhood. No single deformity points her out as a marked character. Who would believe that the <u>Evil One</u> had already found in her a servant and an agent? Yet, such I grieve to tell you is the case. Therefore, you must be on your guard against her. Shun her example. Avoid her company. Exclude her from your sports. And shut her out from your converse. Teachers! You must watch her! Weigh well her words and scrutinize her actions. Punish her body, to save her soul. For it is my duty to warn you, and my tongue falters as I tell it that this girl, this child, the native of a <u>Christian Land</u>, no better than many a little <u>heathen</u> that says its prayers to <u>Brahama</u> and kneels before <u>Juggernaut</u>. This girl is a liar... (*Jane Eyre*)

勃洛克赫斯特先生：孩子们！你们看见这个姑娘了吧。她虽然还小，有跟平常的小女孩一样的外貌，没有明显的残疾说明她是个特殊人物。谁会相信<u>恶魔</u>已占据了她，驱使她为奴仆，为代表？可是我要痛心地说：事实就是这样。因此，你们要小心提防着她，避免学她的样；不要跟她在一起，不让她参加你们的游戏，不许她跟你们说话。教师们！你们一定要看牢她！注意她的一举一动，掂量她的每句话；惩罚她的肉体以拯救她的灵魂。我的职责是警告你们，我所说的话都是经过慎重考虑的，这个小孩，一个<u>基督教土地</u>上的子民，不比任何一个向<u>异教神坛</u>祈祷、跪拜的<u>异教徒</u>好到哪里去。这女孩是一个骗子！...（《简·爱》》) (Ibid (下): 185)

Western culture is characterized by a religious belief in Christianity whereas most Chinese are deep rooted in Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Thus, few Chinese viewers would be equipped with equivalent knowledge in this regard. When encountering such religious terms as "Christian clothes", "the Evil One" (which means the evil spirit or the Demon), "Brahma" and "Juggernaut" (both are Indian gods), most probably they have no store of encyclopedic knowledge which they can resort to. If these words are translated literally, they won't have any contextual effect on the Chinese viewers as they have no potential contexts at their disposal for processing such kind of information. So as to make these religious terms more accessible to them, some adjustments must be done. But in the first case where most Chinese have already acquired the knowledge that Westerners take faith in God, it will pose no particular difficulty for them to understand "上帝的安排".

In addition to religious beliefs, cultural difference also finds its way into items or names of people or organizations that unique to that culture. In translating these items, special attention must be paid to their acceptance in another culture.

> Mr. Earnshaw: Oh no, children, no. This is Hindley's violin. One of the best in Liverpool. Mm, fine tone. And a bow to go with it. There you are. Paganini. (*Wuthering Heights*)
>
> 恩萧先生：噢，不，孩子们，不要这样。这是辛德利的小提琴，是利物浦最好的一把。唔，音色很好，还配有一把弓呢。给你，帕格尼尼。(《呼啸山庄》)
>
> (Ibid (下): 309)

"Paganini" is a famous Italian violinist and composer, who is little known to common Chinese people. Thus its transliteration into Chinese "帕格尼尼" is unlikely to find any corresponding reservoir of knowledge on the Chinese viewers for them to process this new information. Maybe some can get an idea of its being a musician according to both the preceding utterances and situational contexts, but the cost of processing effort they invent in such a guessing will not be equal to the benefits of achieving a

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contextual effect when the name is simply generalized as "大音乐家". Here is another example.

Red: There must be a con like me in every prison in America. I'm the guy who can get it for you. Cigarettes, a bag of reefer, if that's your thing...bottle of brandy, to celebrate your kid's high school graduation. Damn near anything within reason. Yes, sir! I'm a regular Sears and Roebuck. So when Andy Dufresne came to me in 1949...and asked me to smuggle Rita Hayworth into the prison for him... I told him, "No problem." (Cit. in the DVD *The Shawshank Redemption*)

瑞德：美国各监狱少不了像我这种人，我什么都弄得到。香烟啦，大麻啦，家有喜事想喝白兰地也行。是的，我就像邮购公司。1949 年，安迪·杜弗伦要我把丽泰·海华斯弄给他，我只说"没问题"。(《肖申克的救赎》

Similar to the above case, "Sears and Roebuck" is one of the U.S.'s largest purveyors of general merchandise born during the latter part of the 19th century, which provides general services including mail-order. The transliteration of the company name would work out little, if ever, contextual effect on average Chinese viewers. Instead, it is substituted by the translation of one of its functions as "邮购公司", making the processing job an easy one for the viewers who can come up immediately with a contextual assumption of the utterance. However, it is argued that the literal transliteration of the name "Rita Hayworth" is appropriate under this situation for its relevance will be sought later as the movie proceeds. The name "丽泰·海华斯" may put most Chinese audience at a loss when they first glance at it, but as the plot moves on, when they arrive at the scene featuring the prisoners in the Shawshank who wowed at the appearance of a beauty on the screen, and hear the private exchange between Red and Andy in which Andy wants a favor from Red of bringing Rita Hayworth in Prison for him, the viewing audience then cannot fail to establish the relation for the name "丽泰·海华斯" and "The Love Goddess" film star on the screen. The broken relevance then can be re-established and although the processing effort invented is greater than expected, the contextual effect achieved is enough to offset

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the effort: the Chinese viewers acquire a piece of information that is totally new to their mind, and this warranted knowledge can now be stored in their memory for later use as a potential context against which more information will be processed.

Apart from culture-specific items, culture images are also varying among different language commuinities. So at times, in order that images of a specific culture be appropriately transferred into another culture, methods of modification, reconstruction or even recreation are to be employed. Below are several examples, some of which are re-cited:

Lydia: Hello, Lizzy. Hello, Mr. Darcy. She's <u>as drunk as a horse</u>. (*Pride and Prjudice*)

莉迪亚：你好，丽茜。你好，达西先生。瞧她<u>醉醺醺的样子</u>。(《傲慢与偏见》)

(Ibid (上): 362)

Lizzy: Yes mama, I know, I know <u>as abrupt as bird's feathers</u>.

丽茜：是的，妈妈，我知道。我知道这事来得<u>太突然了</u>。(《傲慢与偏见》)

(*Ibid*) (Ibid (上): 370)

In the movie *Pride and Prejudice,* the original culture images of "as drunk as a horse" and "as abrupt as bird's feathers" are modified for the Chinese viewers to have an easier access to them. While the literal renderings "醉得像匹马" and "像羽毛突然飞来", would lead the viewers to nowhere as there are no such culture images in the Chinese language. On other occasions, due to the lack of a correspondent image in the Chinese culture, the original culture image in the English language has to be reconstructed accordingly.

Ellen: Food is what he needs most from the looks of him Mr. Earnshaw. He's <u>as thin as a sparrow</u>. Come into the kitchen, child. (*Wuthering Heights*)

艾伦：恩萧先生，看他这样子，还是先吃点东西好，他<u>瘦得像根杆</u>。到厨房来吧，孩子。（《呼啸山庄》）(Ibid (下): 308)

Scarlett: I'm scared to death, and if you had the sense of a <u>goat</u> you'd scared, too!

Oh, the Yankees! (*Gone with the Wind*)

斯佳丽：我吓得要死勒。你就是呆得像头<u>驴</u>，也该觉得害怕。噢，北佬！

（《乱世佳人》）(Ibid (上): 221)

In the above cases, the original culture images of "a sparrow" and "a goat" are reconstructed respectively as "a spile" and "a donkey" which are quite familiar to the Chinese people under the situations. As a result, using their common knowledge, the Chinese viewers can get larger contextual effects with no burden. Still there are times when the same image is attached with different or even conflicting connotations in two cultures. An example comes from the movie *Wuthering Heights*.

Isabella: it's a brother's duty, dear Edgar, to introduce his sister to some other type

than fops and pale young poets.

Edgar: Oh, you want a <u>dragon</u>?

Isabella: Yes, I do. With a fiery mustache.

依莎贝拉：这是一个哥哥的义务，亲爱的埃得加，你总不能把自己的妹妹介绍

给那些花花公子或弱不禁风的年轻诗人吧。

埃得加：哦，你不该想嫁一个<u>龙骑兵</u>吧？

依莎贝拉：是的，还长着火红的大胡子。(Cit. in 柴梅萍，2001：93)

The image of "dragon" may strike the Chinese people as "noble, mighty" or something related to the "imperial family" in ancient China, however, in the eyes of Western people, it is associated with the evil "demon". If the word "dragon" is transferred into "龙骑兵" in Chinese, the Chinese viewers will be misled to assume that it has the same cultural meaning both in the west and China. However, as they proceed to the next line, their assumption immediately meets with a contradiction that a dragon is "with fiery mustache", and at this point they probably will get confused and feel at a loss. In this circumstance, it is most preferable to recreate a cultural

image for the Chinese viewers and have the term "dragon" rendered into "野蛮人" which holds a savage face. The Chinese viewers will then select some appropriate contextual assumption from a range of potentials in their mind about what a savage is like, for example, one such as "a savage has an ugly face and a deformed body" to process this culture image. And when they hear Isabella's utterance, it will further combine to confirm their assumption, leading to a positive strengthening of the contextual effect.

4.3.2.2 Mental Processing Effort

"Mental processes, like all biological processes, involve a certain effort, a certain expenditure of energy." (Sperber & Wilson, 2001:124) Any communicative event constantly involves information processing which is quite an exhaustible job for brain. As a matter of fact, the brain of mankind is such an intricate device that it is almost impossible to detect exactly its working procedures. In addressing the mental effort involved in information processing within a certain context, it is natural that what has to be taken into account is not only the effort needed in processing an assumption in a given context, but also the effort made in selecting the appropriate context in which the information is being processed. When the viewers get down to the comprehension of a subtitled movie, they actually immersed in a cognitive environment that is interplay of their physical environment and their cognitive abilities, endowed with a huge potential context of not only all the assumptions that they are aware of, but also all the assumptions that they are capable of becoming aware of in his physical environment. However, not all the assumptions available from the potential context are equally accessible at any given point in time, and the different degrees of accessibility of contextual assumptions are featured by the amount of effort their retrieval demands. Under an intuition of optimal relevance as well as a general principle of effort saving, they "naturally start out with those contextual assumptions that most easily accessible to them" (Gutt, 2004: 28) and proceeds to retrieve, construct and process a number of assumptions as the discourse goes on. Thus for

subtitles to offer an initial assumption from which the viewers continue to derive other contextual effects for their further comprehension of other information, it is quite essential these given starts are highly adequate and optimal relevance be guaranteed to make sure that the viewers' mental processing effort be kept to a minimum. Movie reviewing is a highly demanding task on viewers' mentality for they "can only watch a film frame by frame, and this uninterrupted, immediate exposure (Gottlieb, 1991: 163, cit. in Hajmohammadi, 2005: 2) entails more varied cognitive activities in decoding segments of the image and connecting these segments to the overall discourse woven into the audiovisual structure of the film". (Ibid) When the Chinese viewers watch a foreign movie, they naturally entertain a hope to get the most relevant information from reading subtitles. This is due to their intuition for optimal relevance as well as inclination to effort saving. As a result, movie subtitles tend to compact rendering and discard verbosity, so the method of reduction is usually resorted to in movie subtitles, and this is why subtitling is designated as " the reductive form of translation" (de Linde, 1995, cit. in 李运兴, 2001: 39) or "constrained translation". (Diaz-Cintas, 1999, cit. in Ibid) Take the example mentioned previously, where Chuck is addressing the FedEx staff at the beginning of the movie.

> Chuck: Time rules over us without mercy, not carrying if we're healthy or ill, hungry or drunk, Russian, American, beings from Mars. It's like a fire. It could either destroy us or keep us warm. That's why every FedEx office has a clock, because we live or we die by the clock. We never turn our back on it. And we never, ever allow ourselves…the sin of losing track of time!
>
> Locally, it's 1:56. That means we've got three hours and four minutes…before the end-of-the-day's package sort. That's how long we have. That's how much time we have…before this pulsating, accursed, relentless taskmaster tries to put us out of business. (Cit. in the DVD *Cast Away*)

Here we have two different versions:

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(1) 查克：时间…无情地支配我们，不管我们健康生病、饥饿醉酒，不管是俄国人、美国人或火星人。时间像火般既能杀人、也能帮人，所以每个联邦快递办公室都有钟。我们永远不可对时间置之不理，永远不可容许自己犯下……失去时间观念的罪行！

现在是本地时间下午1时56分。那表示我们还有3小时零4分…去完成今天的邮件分类。在那无情的监工令我们失业前，我们只有那么多时间！（Cit. in the VCD *Cast Away* by 九洲音像出版公司 ISRC CN-A65-02-0252-0/V. J9，168字）

(2) 查克：时间在我们面前是不会有一丝一毫的留恋的，这是世间不变的真理。

不论是在美国，还是在俄国，它就像是一把火，可以毁了我们，也可以为我们取暖。我们每个办公室都要有个钟，因为时间就是我们成败的关键。我们永远都不能无视时间的重要性，我们也永远不能允许自己忘记时间的存在。

现在是当地时间1点56分。也就是说我们还有3小时零4分的时间完成今天的装车任务。这是我们有的一切，这就是我们仅有的时间，否则，别人就会赶在我们之前，损坏我们的商业形象。(Cit. in the DVD *Cast Away*, 212字)

Usually, long and complicated sentences cause more mental efforts to decipher its meaning. Comparing the two versions above, obviously the first one is better than the second not only because it is more accurately rendered, but also for its brevity in saving the viewer's extra effort. Perceiving Chuck's quick speaking, probably most Chinese viewers will feel more relieved at reading the first version. However, the cost of effort can only be assessed against the contextual effect attained, that's to say, a positive degree of relevance must be laid as a solid foundation upon which the estimation of effort and effect be carried out; otherwise it will be pointless to waste the time. Let us look at another example from the movie *Gone with the Wind*.

Scarlett: Why don't you say it, you coward? You're afraid to marry me. You'd rather live with that silly little fool who can't open her mouth except to say "yes", "no", and raise a houseful of mealy-mouthed brats just like her!

Ashley: You mustn't say things like that about Melanie.

丝佳丽：那你为什么不说要娶我，你这个胆小鬼？你不敢娶我！你宁愿娶那个唯唯诺诺，会养一窝像她那样说话拐弯抹角的坏孩子的傻女人！

阿希礼：你不能那样说玫兰妮。(Cit. in 汪珍珠 & 何晓嘉，2003：65)

After Ashley Wilkes, whom Scarlett has long dreamed of marrying, refused her, Scarlett became so furious that she flew her rage at him, pouring out a string of curses. While the above translation may strike the viewers' eyes as coherently phrased, they cannot be said to be a satisfactory version since there are so many attributives modifying the central noun "女人"(Melanie), and the viewers have to torture through before they reach the final point. Comparatively speaking, the rendition given below can better reflect the frenzied mood of Scarlett and save the Chinese viewers' energy to a great extent.

丝佳丽：那你怎么不说了？胆小鬼！不敢娶我，你宁可娶那个唯唯诺诺的傻瓜，然后生一堆像她那样面青唇白的傻孩子。

阿希礼：你不能那样说玫兰妮。

Chapter IV Functional Subtitling Strategies Explored

Movie is polysemiotic medium that transfers meaning through multiple channels, such as picture, dialogue and music. Different cultures are presented not only verbally but also visually and aurally, and it is the perfect combination of all these artistic elements that hold a standing charm on viewers, making them brave the queues or crowds to see the live version at the theatre. And for a foreign movie to better cater to the viewers' interest and needs, the subtitles should do the utmost to fulfill its role of offering the target viewers the experience as if they already knew the original language. In order to achieve this ideal, an optimal relevance should be established between the contexts of the original movie and the target viewers. While the goal of being optimal relevant depends in large on close cooperation and coordination between the subtitler and the viewers, it is contended that the main responsibility lie with the subtitler who should judge adequately the viewers' cognitive abilities and decide on specific subtitling strategies accordingly. In this sense, "subtitling makes it particularly obvious that translation is a decision-making procedure" and "it is important to understand the choices available to the subtitler and the effects produced by different subtitling decisions". (Kovacic, 1996: 298, cit. in Taylor, 2000:9) Considering all the important factors that sway the subtitling process, it seems that a viewer-oriented, image-bound approach be an appropriate choice. Fallen within this general approach, several functional strategies can be identified.

1. Relevance and Reduction

Subtitles are a multi-medial text type that incorporates audio and visual elements into a holistic integrity. The translations of spoken utterances into written words do not function in a vacuum; they are backed up by other filmic components like soundtrack, musical score, effects, characters' facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. However, it cannot be denied that to watch a subtitled movie, the viewers constantly put themselves at stake for a certain amount of information loss as they have to shift their minds between the two activities of viewing and reading. While the loss of image message from subtitle reading is inevitable, it should be kept at minimum for people go to theatres to watch, not to read. In light of this account, it becomes

especially apparent that subtitles should remain unobtrusive as possible, leaving viewers enough time for image reading. Besides, the technical constraints dictated by time and space will often than not make it impossible to track down full dialogues. As a rule, "the subtitler should not attempt to transfer everything, even when this is spatio-temporally feasible. The subtitler should attempt to keep a fine balance between retaining a maximum of the original text (essential for the comprehension of the linguistic part of the target film), and allowing ample time for the eye to process the rest of the non-linguistic aural and visual elements (essential for the appreciation of the aesthetic part of the target film."(Karamitroglou, 1998:11) It is in account of this that subtitling is also regarded as "the reductive form of translation" (de Linde, 1995, cit. in 李运兴, 2001:39) or "constrained translation" (Diaz-Cintas, 1999, cit. in Ibid). Yet the reduction cannot be done at random, it must be conducted under the guiding principle that optimal relevance be maintained between the contexts of the original movie and the target viewers. What is left out should be the information of least relevance. In other words, reduction should not impair the overall understanding of either the characters or the contexts of the movie. To attain the goal of keeping the target viewers on track of the narrative and helping them to "come as near as possible to the experience the source-language viewers have of the image-story" (Hajmohammadi, 2005:8), the subtitle translators "enter a decision-making process where they determine what has to be translated and what can be left out". (Schwarz, 2002: 9)

1.1 Condensation

Considering scenes where the utterances are delivered at an unusually fast pace because the speaker is in a frantic mood or a desperate situation, condensation of the original lines seems to be a preferred choice. For example, in the movie *The Graduate*, Benjamin got very flustered when Mr. Robinson suddenly came home. For fear that Mr. Robinson should misunderstand his staying in Mrs. Robinson's bedroom, Ben rushed hurriedly downstairs and tried to explain.

Mr. Robinson: Is that Ben's car in front?

Benjamin: Yes, sir! I drove...er...I drove Mrs. Robinson home. She wanted me to

drive her home so I drove her home. (*The Graduate*)

罗宾逊先生：门前是本的车吗？

本：是的，先生！应......应罗宾逊夫人的要求，我送她回家。(《毕业生》)

(Cit. in the DVD *The Graduate*)

Benjamin's fast talking speed and the repeated saying "I drove Mrs. Robinson home. She wanted me to drive her home so I drove her home" reveal his extreme restlessness. In subtitling, however, it is unnecessary to track the repetition as the Chinese viewers probably have already got such information from both the frame and the stammer "应......应罗宾逊夫人的要求". The version given above can be regarded as a satisfactory one as it saves the viewers extra effort in processing the redundant information without diminishing the contextual effect. On the other hand, condensation is usually conducted when a word is repeated in the form of a synonym or a similar expression without additional semantic value in the same line.

Mr. Bennet: You surprise me there. I had heard of Lady Catherine as a very proud and

haughty woman.

Collins: Such is a vulgar opinion, sir. (*Pride and Prejudice*)

本尼特先生：你的话太让我惊讶了。我听说凯瑟琳夫人是个妄自尊大的人。

柯林斯：那些都是粗人愚见，先生。(《傲慢与偏见》(Ibid (上): 358)

The underlined words "proud" and "haughty" have the similar semantic meaning, so the Chinese subtitle makes them condense into one term "妄自尊大的" without disturbing much the viewing effect.

1.2 Reductive Paraphrasing

Subtitles should capture the core of a movie so as to give the viewers a coherent move from one scene to another. Therefore, long and complicated sentences or reiterations have to be paraphrased to ensure adequate time for image reading.

> Mr. Robinson: What? You look to me like the kind of guy who has to fight them off.
> Doesn't he look to you like the kind of guy who has to fight them off?
> Mrs. Robinson: Yes, he does. (*The Graduate*)
> 罗宾逊先生：在我看来，你是那种敢于击退种种阻碍，去争取所爱的男子汉。你也是这样认为的，是不是？
> 罗宾逊夫人：是的。(《毕业生》) (Ibid (上): 83)

In the above example, Mr. Robinson restates his opinion of Ben when enquiring about Mrs. Robinson. In translating, the subtitler summarizes the reiterated part and offers the viewers a coherent link. In this way, not only adequate coherence is ensured, but also the viewers can find without extra effort being spent that Mr. Robinson's utterances to Ben and Mrs. Robinson are optimally related.

There are other occasions when reductive paraphrasing is involved. For instance, the caption of a letter, a note or a newspaper headline is presented before the eyes of the viewers within a flash of time, yet the information contained is crucial in the development of the plot. And as far as the time limit and the viewers' cognitive ability are concerned, subtitling of these parts often results in a reductive paragraph. Let us refer to the translation of a condolence letter in *Gone with the Wind*.

> Dear Madam,
>
> ... ...
>
> Though Captain Hamilton was not vouchsafed a heroic death upon the field of glory,
>
> he was none the less a hero, dying of pneumonia, following an attack of measles.

I am, Madam, very respectfully

　　Your obt Jewt

　　Wade Hamilton

虽然哈密尔顿上尉不是战死沙场，而是死于肺炎及麻疹，但他依然是英雄。

我为此表示尊敬！

It is a condolence letter delivered to Scarlett after her husband Charles Hamilton died at the battlefield. A close-up of the letter is displayed within a measure of seconds, and a brief paraphrasing of the original content will suffice to inform the viewers of the happening.

1.3 Deletion

Time and space constraints challenge movie subtitler more often than not, and this usually leads to deletion of some messages. In general, "a decision as to which pieces of information to omit or to include should depend on the relative contribution of these pieces of information to the comprehension and appreciation of the target film as a whole." (Karamitroglou, 1998:11)

Movie dialogues are full of filler words or expressions which are of little importance or add no new information. Such empty words as interjections or short answers are sacrificed in order that time and space could be saved. Here are several examples in which the words of least communicative relevance are omitted.

　　Roy: She left Scotland last night.

　　Kitty: Without telling you?

　　Roy: She's not been here then.

　　Kitty: Not since she walked out of here with you the other day.

　　Roy: Look here, can I come in? (*Waterloo Bridge*)

　　罗伊：她昨晚离开了苏格兰。

　　凯蒂：没告诉你？

罗伊：那么她没来过这里。

凯蒂：自从那天和你一起走后，就没来过。

罗伊：我可以近来吗？（《魂断蓝桥》）(Ibid (上): 335)

The omission of the discourse marker "look" in this case will not affect the viewers' understanding of the talk; on the contrary, as the viewers can judge from the screen that Roy is anxiously looking for his lover Myra, such reduction of unimportant information will enhance the intense feeling on the viewers, making them concentrate their attention on the worried look of Roy.

Joanna: <u>Well</u>, I've been in New York for about two months now, so...

Ted: I didn't know.

Joanna: Anyway, that's why I wanted to talk to you today, because...<u>um</u>...

Ted: <u>Hmmm</u>?

Joanna: Last time you saw me I was in...a pretty...bad...shape...<u>yeah</u> I was. I was.

Ted: <u>Well</u> you look—you look lovely...<u>yeah</u>...

Joanna: <u>Haa</u>...<u>uhhh</u>... (*Kramer VS. Kramer*)

乔安娜：我回纽约已经两个月了，所以......

特德：我不知道啊。

乔安娜：不管怎样，所以今天我找你谈，因为......

特德：<u>什么</u>？

乔安娜：你上次看到我的时候，我很......难看......是这样的，是的。

特德：现在你看起来——看起来挺好的......真的......

乔安娜：<u>哈......呃......</u>（《克莱默夫妇》）(Ibid (下): 372-373)

The exchange takes place years later after Joanna, who has departed her son and husband Ted, returns. The talk is full of hesitations which are revealed by such short responses as "hmmm", "haa", "uhhh", "um" and "yeah". While omitting some of them without affecting the viewers' comprehension, others are given a fair treatment and rendered in compliance with the situational context. The restlessness and

constraint displayed on the characters' face and body gestures can better locate the viewers and therefore, the contextual effect on the whole is not cut down.

Here is another illustration:

Mr. O'Hara: What difference does it make whom you marry? So long as he's a Southerner and thinks like you. And when I'm gone, I leave Tara to you.

Scarlett: I don't want Tara, plantations don't mean anything when…

Mr. O'Hara: Do you mean to tell me Katie Scarlett O'Hara that Tara, that land doesn't mean anything to you? Why, land is the only thing in the world worth working for, worth fighting for, worth dying for. Because it's the only thing that lasts.

(*Gone with the Wind*)

奥哈拉先生：嫁给谁又有什么关系呢？只要他是个南方人，跟你想法差不多就行。等我死了，塔拉庄园就是你的了。

斯佳丽：我不要，种植园有什么用，如果……

奥哈拉先生：凯蒂·斯佳丽·奥哈拉，你是说塔拉对你毫无意义吗？要知道，土地是这个世界上唯一值得劳作、值得战斗、值得为它而死的东西，因为它是唯一永存的。（《乱世佳人》）(Cit. in 汪珍珠 & 何晓嘉，2003：60-61)

In the dialogue between Mr. O'Hara and his daughter Scarlett, "Tara" is mentioned several times. While the viewers probably have already been informed that Tara is the land where the O'Haras live on, it is no longer necessary to translate it every time it appears. Omission under this situation where two terms refer to the same thing thus becomes indispensable for keeping the viewers' focus on more relevant information. Without any retarding, the viewers can shift their minds between the concept of "塔拉" and "种植园" as they have such assumption stored in memory from image viewing that Tara is the plantation that belongs to the O'Haras.

Another case in which deletion is employed is illustrated as follows:

Bus-driver: Are you coming along?

Forrest: No Mister, I'm not to be taking rides from strangers.

Bus-driver: This is the bus to school. (*Forrest Gump*)

司机：你要上车吗？

福勒斯特：不，我不上陌生人的车。

司机：车是去学校的。（《阿甘正传》）(Cit. in 毕文成，2003：53)

As it is clear from the picture that little Forrest is addressing the bus-driver, there is no need to translate "Mister". For in a movie, visual images are a large source of information. It is wise then to leave out such messages as the viewers can obtain visually and give them enough time for enjoying watching.

2. Other Strategies

The strategy of reduction is frequently resorted to due to the many constraints imposed upon movie subtitling. Yet, it does not exclude the use of other strategies. With viewers being the focus of subtitling, the subtitler has to give priority to the consistency and coherence of the movie as not to confuse the viewers. As a result, other strategies like transfer and expansion are also turned to for maintaining an optimal relevance between the original movie and the target viewers.

2.1 Transfer

Transfer refers to the strategy of translating the source text completely and correctly. While subtitling more often than not resorts to reductive measures for the forced restrictions, there are occasions when transference is privileged to accomplish the task of bringing the viewers the best effect. As Newmark (2001b: 36-37) points out: "Source language texts consist of words, that is all that is there, on the page." In movie subtitles, this does not necessarily mean that nothing should be missed, but due respect should be paid to the creator of the original text. Such cases include a monologue or an aside that displays revelation of the protagonist's inner world or narration of the movie, the viewers usually cannot find much support from the other elements of the screen, so the subtitles should track down the original content as complete and faithful as possible.

Caption: Scotland 1280 A. D.

Narration: I shall tell you of William Wallace. Historians from England will say I am a liar, but history is written by those who have hanged heroes. The king of Scotland had died without a son, and the king of England, a cruel pagan known as Edward the Longshanks, claimed the throne of Scotland for himself, Scotland's nobles fought him, and fought each other over the crown. So Longshanks invited them to talks of truce——no weapons, one page only. Among the farmers of that shire was Malcolm Wallace, a commoner with his own lands. He had two sons——John and William. (*Braveheart*)

旁白：我要告诉你威廉·华莱士的事迹，英格兰史学家会说我扯谎，但历史是灭掉英雄的人写的。苏格兰国王死后无子，英格兰王——残酷的异教徒长脚爱德华，自封为苏格兰王。苏格兰贵族群起攻之，并为争夺王位互相残杀。长脚邀他们讲和，不准携带武器，只带一名随从。这个郡的农名代表是麦肯·华莱士。他有自己的田地，有两个儿子，约翰和威廉。(Cit. in the movie DVD *Braveheart*)

With scenes presenting a vast luxuriant land and Scottish windpipe ringing out a slow tempo, the narration at the outset of the movie *Braveheart* provides important clues about the setting, the time and main characters of the story. Before watching the movie, the viewers have no other recourse as for what the story is about, thus they rely heavily on such clues to get a general idea of the unfolding plot. When working on such narrations, it is suggested that the subtitler keep its original lines so that the viewers can benefit most out of watching them. Let us take a look at another example.

Karen's Narration: If I know a song of Africa: of the giraffe and the African new moon, lying on her back, of the plows in the fields and the sweaty faces of the coffee-bakers. Does Africa know a song of me? Will the air over the plain quiver with a color that I have had on? Or, will the children invent a game in which my name is? Or, will the full moon throw a shadow over the gravel on the drive that was like me? Or, will the eagles of the Ngong hills look out for me? (*Out of Africa*)

凯伦的旁白：如果我知道一首非洲的歌，歌唱的是栖息在她脊背上的长颈鹿和天边的新月，唱田里的农具、烘制咖啡的人汗水涔涔的面颊，那么非洲可知道我的

歌？平原上方的天空是否还留着我增经拥有过的色彩？孩子们是否会发明一个

以我为名的游戏？圆月可否还会在碎石车道上投下一道肖似我的阴影？恩共山

的鹰可否会将我找寻？（《走出非洲》）(Ibid (上): 554)

The above lines are narrated by the heroine Karen following the funeral of Denys, her lover. It reveals her profound feelings for the land of Africa as well as a deep sorrow at Denys's death. Hence, a faithful and unabridged rendition is preferred so that the viewers can gain an insight into the heroine's inner world. Besides, the style of the translated narration complies with the heroine's identity as a literary writer. The viewers can find this optimally relevant to their previous assumption about Karen's literate mindedness as a person of letters and her nostalgic emotions for Africa.

2.2 Expansion

In addition to reductive strategies, expansion also serves as an effective tool to help the viewers when literal translation of the original lines blocks their understanding of the movie.

Benjamin: Yes. Elaine, I like you. I like you so much. Do you believe that? Do you?

Elaine: Yes.

Benjamin: You're the first thing for so long that I like. The first person that I could stand to be with. My whole life is such a waste. There's just nothing. I'm sorry. I'll take you home now. (*The Graduate*)

本杰明：是的。伊莲，我喜欢你，非常喜欢你。你相信吗？

伊莲：相信。

本杰明：这么久以来，你是我喜欢的第一个人，第一个我能忍受，可以和她在一起的人。认识你之前，我无所事事，整个一生都在虚掷光阴，一事无成。对不起，我送你回家。（《毕业生》）(Ibid (上): 95)

The underlined part has gone through some expansion so that the Chinese viewers can

make a better idea of Benjamin's utterances from the more coherent and consistent version. Here are a few more examples from the movie *Out of Africa*.

Karen: You just want to be away.

Denys: It's not meant to hurt you.

Karen: It does!

Denys: Karen, I'm with you because I choose to be with you. I don't want to live someone else' idea of how to live. Don't ask me to do that? I don't want to find out one day I'm at the end of someone else's life. I'm willing to pay for mine. To be lonely sometimes, to die alone if I have to, I think that's fair.

Karen: Not quite, you want me to pay for it as well.

凯伦：你只是想离开。

丹尼斯：我无心要伤害你。

凯伦：你伤害了。

丹尼斯：凯伦，我和你在一起，因为这是我的选择。我不想按照别人的想法去生活，别让我那么做，好吗？我不想有朝一日发现我成了别人生活的尾声。我愿意为此付出代价，去忍受偶尔的孤独，落寞的死去。我认为那是公平的。

凯伦：不太公平，你也想让我付出代价。(Ibid (上): 545)

Lady Byrne: You have mine!

Karen: Thank you. I hope you will be happy here. I was.

Lady Byrne: I'm sorry I won't know you.

白纳夫人：我答应你！

凯伦：谢谢您。希望您在这儿过得愉快。我以前就很愉快。

白纳夫人：很遗憾没时间去多了解你。(Ibid (上): 550-551)

Bror: I wouldn't ask, but tips were a bit light. Are you alright?

Karen: If I get a decent crop.

布罗尔：我不该问的，但只需借一点应急。你还好吗？

凯伦：收成好的话我就好。(Ibid (上): 540)

Spoken language is strewn with short utterances and elliptical sentences. While source language viewers can make it a snap of these conversations which resemble their everyday routine, the Chinese viewers may feel at a loss of these petty talks. Thus it is wise that the subtitler fill up the gap for them to be accessible to the Chinese viewers. The examples shown above serve as typical illustrations. All the underlined parts in the original have undergone some adjustments to go with the situational contexts of the movie image and cognitive abilities of the target viewers.

2.3 Rewriting

Rewriting is an extreme form of subtitling strategy. "A source text is usually composed originally for a situation in the source culture...it is thus not to be expected that merely 'trans-coding' a source text will result in a serviceable translatum..." (Vermeer in Chesterman, 1989:173, cit. in Taylor, 1999:6) Within movie subtitling, the overriding goal is to have the original text successfully translated and to create an immediate effect on the target viewers. Given this, adaptation is sometimes inevitable. And although the strategy of rewriting should be avoided as possibly as it can be, it will be quite rewarding if wielded carefully and appropriately.

As the examples given previously, the different renditions of the same utterance "That's it" under different situational contexts are typical of this case.

> Chuck: So, <u>that's it</u>. (*Cast Away*)
>
> 查克：仁至义尽了。

> Hartley: Right, <u>that's it</u> then.
>
> 哈特利：好，奏完了。(*Titanic*)

> Max: <u>That's it</u>! That's Manderley! (*Rebecca*)
>
> 麦克西姆：到了，这就是曼德丽。

3. A Blemish of Subtitling

Subtitling is constantly associated with the problem of register as it involves a transition of communicative mode from spoken into written language. Since written language differs from spoken language in a number of ways: hesitations, incomplete utterances, pauses as well as some phonological features like word stress, intonation patterns, the speaker's speaking tone, pitch, rhythm and accent which are characteristic of spoken language are largely, or entirely absent from written language (胡壮麟, 2001: 215), it is then impossible for the written language to incorporate all the nuances conveyed in utterances. Besides, the various dialects, idiolects, colloquialisms that are frequently used in movie texts usually fail to emerge in subtitles. All these elements, which are characteristic of oral mode, help to set the context of movie, and their absence in subtitles may result in a painful loss on the pragmatic effect. For example, Prissy, the little Negro girl in the movie *Gone with the Wind*, speaks ungrammatical English, but in subtitles it is hard to capture such features.

> Prissy: I knows! I knows! I knows how to do it. I've done it lots and lots. Let me doctor, let me. I can do everything.
>
> 碧茜：我知道！我知道！我全知道。我做过好多次了，让我来做吧。我全都会做。
>
> Prissy: I don't know how can I tell such a lie. Ma ain't never let me around when folks was having them.
>
> 碧茜：我不知道我怎么会撒谎。妈妈给那些黑人接生时从不让我看。
>
> (Ibid (上): 218, 220)

It is a fact that "spoken language is grammatically more intricate but lexically less dense, and that written language is more nominalised compared to the dynamic, verbal nature of the spoken variant. Thus written transcriptions of spoken dialogue might be expected to betray their artificial nature". (Taylor, 2000: 5) This is especially

the case when movie dialogues involve the use of foul language.

> Lt. Dan: Goddamn it! What are you doing? Leave me here, what are you doing, just
>
> leave me here, get out! God, I said leave me here, Goddamn it! (*Forrest Gump*)
>
> 丹中尉：可恶！你干什么？别管我，你干什么，把我放下来，滚开，上帝啊，我
>
> 说把我留下，可恶！(《阿甘正传》)

> Lt. Dan: I can't leave the platoon. I told you to leave me there, Gump! Forget about
>
> me, get yourself out! Did you hear what I said? Goddamn it, put me down! Get your
>
> ass out of here. (*Forrest Gump*)
>
> 丹中尉：我不能丢下纵队。我让你把我放下来，阿甘！别理我，你自己走吧！你
>
> 没听到吗？可恶，放我下来！你自己走呀！(《阿甘正传》) (Ibid (上): 173-174)

The use of such vulgarism like "Goddamn it" is condemned as severe blasphemy against God in the western world. In putting it down into Chinese subtitles, the term "可恶" seems to downplay its tone and the contextual effect the Chinese viewers received probably can't be expected to equal that the original audience could have felt.

4. Subtitling of Cultural Elements

As stated earlier, movie subtitling is a particular form of cross-cultural communication. Movies can be a tremendously influential and extremely powerful vehicle for transferring cultures, values, ideas and information. In movies, different cultures are presented through multiple channels. In the process of transferring these cultural elements into another language, the subtitler usually has two methods at his/her disposal: domestication and foreignization. The two concepts differ from each other in that: Domestication, or domesticating method means bringing the foreign culture closer to the reader in the target culture, making the text recognizable and familiar to them; whereas foreignization, or foreignizing method means leading the reader over to the foreign culture. In dealing with the cultural elements in subtitling, the author of the present thesis is of the opinion that domestication is more preferable

and applicable than foreignization.

With the target viewers being the focus of movie subtitling, their cognitive abilities and demands must be given prior consideration. In order that an optimal relevance be established between the cultural context of the original movie and the context of the target viewerw, it is most desirable that the target viewers find among their potential inner contexts appropriate ones to process the cultural information presented in subtitles. Thus for the subtitling of foreign cultural elements to gain any contextual effect on the viewers, a precondition is that the viewers find it relevant to their previously held assumptions. And as far as the viewers' inner contexts are concerned, domestication seems to be a superior choice over foreignization. Since an elaboration has been contributed to the subtitling of cultural elements in the previous chapter, here the author will brief on this point with just one example from *Roman Holiday*.
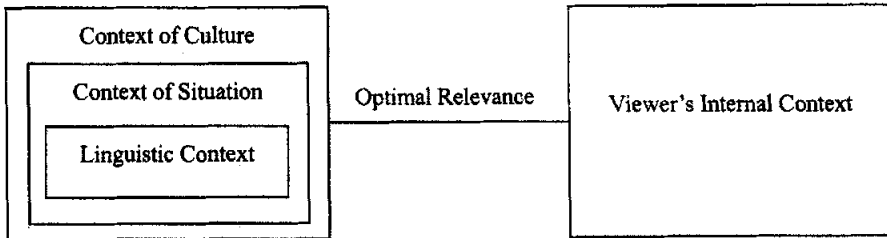
> Joe: Irving, I can't talk over the telephone. One word in the wrong quarter and this whole thing might, <u>blow sky high</u>. It's front page stuff, that's all I can tell you, it might be political, it might be a sensational scam, I'm not sure which but it's a big story. It's gotta have pictures.
>
> 乔：尔文?，这事不好在电话上说。我要走漏了只言片语，这整件事就会弄得<u>满城风雨</u>了。我只能告诉你是个头条新闻，也许是政治新闻，或者是个惊人的骗局，我还不能确定是哪类，但肯定是个大新闻，得有些照片。(Ibid (下): 253-254)

While the original audience has no difficulty understanding the exaggeration "blow sky high", the Chinese viewers probably cannot find any appropriate potential context to process such a figure of speech. Therefore, if the original line is subtitled into "这整件事就会吹到天上去", it is likely that the Chinese viewers will get nowhere and regard this information as irrelevant because they have no stored contextual assumptions in which it could be processed. Or even if they have figured out a vague idea of its connotation, the relevance established would be very weak and the processing effort invested would not offset the contextual effect it aroused. On the contrary, the rendition in the above case is quite familiar to the Chinese viewers' eyes

and there lies little difficulty for them to choose a context from their mind to go with it. Thus an immediate effect is obtained and extra processing efforts are saved.

To sum up, in movie subtitling, the supreme ideal would be to give the target viewers the experience they would have as if they already knew the source language. In order to achieve this goal, an optimal relevance has to be achieved between the contexts of the original movie and the target viewers. This relationship is indicated in the following illustration:

Context of Culture		
	Context of Situation	
		Linguistic Context

Optimal Relevance

Viewer's Internal Context

Chapter V Conclusion

Due to its significance in mass and cross-cultural communication, more and more attention has been paid to the research of movie subtitling, a highly specialized area in translation studies nowadays.

As a multi-medial text type, the many particularities of subtitling deliver great challenges to the subtitler. The written form of spoken utterances added to the screen must follow the pace of the dialogues and work in concert with other audiovisual elements. A good subtitle ensures that a successful communication being carried out between the original movie and the target viewers. And in order to achieve a satisfactory work, the subtitler should always bear in mind the demands and capabilities of the intended audience. Since it is a generally acknowledged fact that human beings instinctively aim at an optimal relevance when processing information, then a great responsibility entrusted to the subtitler is that the messages contained in subtitles being the most relevant. Otherwise, subtitle reading would cost too much mental effort from the viewers and disturb their enjoying of the pictures.

On account of the spatiotemporal constraint imposed upon movie translation and with the overriding goal of achieving the largest contextual effect on the viewers, the subtitling calls for a series of functional strategies, among which the reductive method is the most frequently employed. However, the reduction should be guided by the principle of optimal relevance and meet the viewers' cognitive needs. Apart from reduction, other strategies such as transfer, expansion and rewriting also serve as effective tools in accomplishing the goal.

Movies act as a shiny reflector of the culture of a given community and movie translation is an important means of cross-cultural communication. Thus the abundant cultural elements in movie are a problem deserving high attention. Considering the viewers' cognitive capabilities and the ultimate purpose of creating an immediate effect on them, domestication is a more encouraged and recommended choice.

So far, the present thesis has contributed an elaboration on movie subtitling in terms of its particularities, contexts concerning the original movie and the target viewers, appropriate translating strategies related to specific decision-making. It holds that in

order that the viewers could benefit most from subtitles, an optimal relevance should be established between the contexts of the original movie and the target viewers. And the maintenance of the optimal relevance depends on the balance of two major factors: contextual effect received by the viewers and the mental effort invested in information processing. However, owing to the limited resources collected and the insufficient knowledge on the actual and exact working of human brain, the thesis hasn't probed deep enough into the analysis of how to judge the degree of being optimally relevant. It is suggested that some empirical approaches be applied to the study and a more systematic and thorough research be carried out.

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观众作为电影字幕翻译的焦点——语境与关联

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相似文献(1条)

1. 学位论文 李娜 语境顺应论视角探析电影字幕翻译——兼评《霸王别姬》 2006

　　随着世界电影事业的发展，以及中国电影在世界舞台上的日益兴盛，中外电影交流成为了跨文化交流日益重要的篇章。电影字幕翻译研究成为了重要的环节，并作为一门新兴学科，受到翻译界的强烈关注和重视。本文以陈凯歌的电影作品《霸王别姬》为个案研究对象，试图以维索尔伦的"顺应论"为理论基础探讨字幕翻译过程中动态语境顺应对于字幕翻译策略的影响。　　维索尔伦的"顺应论"认为语言使用是在不同意识程度下为实现交际目的而连续不断进行选择的一个过程。语言使用者之所以能做出种种选择，是源于语言的三个特性：变异性，商讨性和顺应性。顺应性是语言使用过程的核心，任何语言的使用都要根据交际环境和交际对象做出动态反应。本文认为，电影字幕翻译作为一种特殊的翻译模式，为了有效实现导演意图及传递原片信息内涵，译者应当充分考虑多种语境因素，并以此为基础，动态地做出适当选择，表达出符合当时语境的意义。　　本文首先剖析了字幕翻译的特点和制约因素，并对语境顺应理论应用于电影字幕翻译中的可行性和合理性做了阐述。结合电影字幕这一特殊媒介在时空上的技术限制，作者从相互关联的三种语境—语言语境、文化语境和情景语境—着手，对英、汉语言在语言语境、文化语境和情景语境上的差异，及对各自语言的影响做了详尽的分析。在此基础上，作者从动态语境顺应论出发，分析了英汉语在语境上的动态顺应，并通过对《霸王别姬》电影字幕翻译的分析，尝试归纳了语境顺应视角的翻译策略。以动态的语境顺应来指导电影字幕翻译策略的选择过程，对于实际的字幕翻译操作有相当的借鉴意义，有助于提高字幕质量。

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