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从关联理论看中国电影字幕的翻译

姓名：张晶

申请学位级别：硕士

专业：外国语言学及应用语言学

指导教师：徐莉娜

20070601

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论文作者签名：张晶　　　　　日期：2007 年 6 月 14 日

导师签名：徐莉娜　　　　　日期：2007 年 6 月 14 日

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Abstract

As a relatively new and special translation, film subtitle translation has become an increasingly important and inseparable branch of translation. Therefore, it is necessary to have a more profound understanding of subtitle translation. This paper analyzes subtitle translation of Chinese films with relevance theory as the theoretical basis.

A tentative attempt has been made to figure out whether subtitle translation of Chinese films is consistent with relevance theory. Many translation theories of different schools can be adapted to the analysis of the translation practice, nevertheless, relevance theory stands out to be the most appropriate one to explain the movie subtitle translation with its central claim that film subtitles should be made relevant enough to produce the optimal relevance so as to achieve the best communicative effects.

Film subtitle translation is restricted by various constraints, thus high-quality subtitles translation poses a great challenge to the subtitlers. Through the analysis of the translated Chinese films, the author categorized some feasible strategies that account for the successful relay of the ideas from the original films. These strategies are summarized from the perspective of relevance theory and concrete examples are given to explain how to achieve the best communicative effects.

It is hoped that the rising attention and interest of translators and other researchers concerned will bring about more fruitful research in the film subtitle translation. A more detailed and all-around analysis of the subtitle translation is expected to be developed to facilitate the cross-cultural communication in film industry.

Key words: relevance theory; subtitles; subtitle translation; optimal relevance

论文摘要

作为一种新兴和特殊的翻译模式，电影字幕翻译已经成为翻译不可或缺的一个组成部分，因此深层次地探讨电影字幕及其翻译显得格外必要。本文即以关联理论为基础分析了中文影片的字幕英译。

本文用关联理论对电影字幕翻译作了尝试性的研究，旨在探讨中文电影的字幕英译是否与关联理论相符合。许多翻译学派的理论都能够用于字幕翻译的研究，但是关联理论是最合适的一种解释字幕翻译的理论。关联理论的中心主张是字幕翻译尽可能地产生最佳关联，来取得最佳的交际效果。

由于受到诸多因素的限制，电影字幕翻译对译者的翻译水平提出了很高的要求。本文作者从关联理论角度出发，通过对中国电影字幕翻译的分析，归纳出一些切实可行的字幕翻译方法，并且辅以具体的例子来论证其正确性。

希望翻译工作者和其他相关研究者更多地关注和研究字幕翻译，展开对字幕翻译更充分、更全面的探讨来进一步促进影视界的跨文化交流。

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Never before have we seen so many foreign films introduced to China and never before have we seen so many Chinese films going abroad. The film industry is now facing a global market. No matter whether it is foreign films entering the Chinese market or Chinese films entering the global market, they are inescapably faced with one problem: the barrier of language. English is recognized as an international language, but not many people know enough English to understand the film dialogues in English. Those Hollywood films need to be adjusted to local needs, which is called localization of films. Translation is just one part of the localization process. Likewise, for international audience to understand Chinese films, Chinese films have to be translated to English or other languages to make themselves global products.

Dubbing and subtitling are the two predominant modes of film translation. Dubbing, or post-synchronization, is defined as "the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip movements of the original dialogue" (Baker, 2004:75). Subtitling is another method of translating films. It is defined as "the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004: 161).

Nowadays, in major cities of China, subtitled films with original voice-track are much favored among the younger generation. Some cinemas posted "imported blockbusters with original sound-track" as a form of advertising. It is mainly attributed to the following reasons. Firstly, there is an increased degree of acceptance of foreign culture, especially among the younger generation. China has already been open to the outside world for a long time. Foreign cultural products such as films and TV series take up a great part of the market. Secondly, there is the frenzy for learning English. In a world with English as the international language, Chinese soon realized the importance of English learning. English films are a perfect channel for the access to authentic English. Thus, many people

choose to watch subtitled films to learn English. Thirdly, subtitling is much cheaper than dubbing. Last but not least, subtitling preserves the original film to the largest extent and protects their aesthetic and artistic value. As Guardini puts it, "subtitling preserves the original film to its entirety and offers the viewers direct access to it. The translation is super-imposed on the original, but does not delete any component of it, except for the minor image loss caused by the one or two lines of text at the bottom of the screen" (1998: 97).

As promoted by the breakthroughs in technology and frequent cross-culture communication, the practice of subtitle translation has undergone rapid development. However, despite the proliferation of work, translation studies haven't paid enough attention to subtitling until very recently. Most of the studies concentrate on "the practical issues for the translators or the physiology of the peculiar brand of speed-reading demanded by subtitles." (Nornes, 1999, online) Only a few of them observe it in depth theoretically. Until today, this research has not been penetrated by such theories as cognitive psychology. The author holds that only when translation practice is explained on the theoretical level can it be recognized and gain due attention. In view of this, the paper will study film subtitle translation from the perspective of relevance theory.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on relevance theory. Relevance theory is intended to be a theory of communication and it does provide lots of insights in explaining communication. Film art, in essence, is a form of communication. Interpersonally speaking, it is the communication between the film producers and film viewers. Technically speaking, it is the communication between film viewers and the screen language. Since films are a channel of communication, relevance theory must be able to shed light on film studies, and film subtitling for sure as it serves as the messenger to help target language viewers to understand foreign films by translating the foreign original sound track

1.3 Methodology

A descriptive-explanatory method will be adopted in this paper. It is basically qualitative rather than quantitative. Data are collected from copyrighted DVDs of some well-known Chinese films, including *Hero*, *Be There or Be Square*, *The Big Shot's Funeral*, *Sigh*, *In the Heat of the Sun*, *Farewell My Concubine*, *In the Mood of Love* etc.

1.4 Research Issues

The present paper focuses on the subtitle translation research and attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent can film subtitle translation be studied within the framework of relevance theory?

2. How are the translation strategy and specific methods applied in subtitling?

3. How adequate is the resulted target text from the relevance theory's perspective?

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of six chapters.

The first part is the introduction.

Chapter Two is the literature review on subtitling studies. It starts with the studies concerning multimedia translation including its concept, requirements and theories. Then it specifies on the studies of subtitling in which major contributions by different scholars are listed out. Discussions are made on the definitions of subtitling, the constraints and corresponding strategies of subtitling and quality control for subtitling at different stages.

Chapter Three describes the theoretical framework that is based on relevance theory. This chapter gives a brief account of relevance theory put forward by Sperber & Wilson.

Due attention is focused on the following notions: optimal relevance, contextual effects and processing efforts. Then it further explores in the translation world with the guide of relevance-theoretic approach—translation proves to be a process of transferring optimal relevance.

In Chapter Four, the limelight is brought on how to use relevance theory to guide subtitles translation. Chapter Five provides sample subtitles from the film to illustrate how relevance affects subtitling translation.

Then follows the conclusion. The author gives a summary of the thesis.

Chapter Two   Literary Review

2.1 Studies Concerning Multimedia Translation

Subtitling translation is one type of multimedia translation that could be studied mainly through the following aspects.

2.1.1 Concept of Multimedia Translation

For a long time, translation was used to make religious, literary, scientific or philosophical texts accessible to a wider readership. However, the kind of translated materials went through a shift—the written world was joined by a new area for translation, that of moving pictures. Even early silent films had some texts in the form of inter-titles inserted between the images to be translated. With the arrival of the sound film in the late 1920s, the field of film translation began to boom, and then followed by many other forms: television translation, video translation, etc. However, the translation studies concerning texts with pictures have been ignored for a long time.

As was said in the preface of *(Multi) Media Translation, Concepts, Practices, and Research*, K. Reiss was the first to draw attention to the "audio-medial" texts which have been written to be spoken or sung, for instance, political speeches, lectures, songs, opera libretti. Later in 1984, Reiss replaced the term by "multi-medial" in order to include texts such as comics which have visual but not acoustic elements.

So what is multimedia? At the beginning, "Multimedia" was associated with teaching (slides, TV, video) and underground art forms, but later its importance increased with the rapid popularization of computers and the internet. Nowadays, multimedia is ubiquitous in our daily life and has become somewhat of a catchall phrase. As was put by Remael Aline, "on the one hand, it is used to refer to the high-tech features of our time such as interactive television, virtual reality, digital video discs and the like; on the other hand, audiovisual translation for film or television, i.e. subtitling, dubbing, voice-over etc. could also be seen to involve multimedia activities. "(Remael Aline, 2001:12)

When we learn about the outside world, we tend to exploit sensory systems or

"modes of communication" including vision, audition and touch. Thus it is rather difficult to define the boundaries of "multimedia translation". As Gambier and Gottlieb have suggested, although " there is a certain confusion between media in a *stricto sensu* meaning (TV, cinema, computer) and codes such as verbal and visual codes, screen translation (film, domestic and corporate video, TV programs), translation for and on the Net, translation of offline products and services should come under the same umbrella of 'multimedia translation'." (Gambier and Gottlieb, 2001: xi).

2.1.2 Requirements on Multimedia Translation

As Gambier and Gottlieb further stated, compared with other forms of translation, multimedia translation requires more teamwork due to its complexity. (2001: xi) This idea is echoed by Remael Aline who said "Various other source texts or models impose themselves or are consciously imposed by the sign-maker on the translation process" (2001:17) which makes it necessary for the translator to seek help from others so as to work out high-quality products. Another point worth noticing is that multimedia translators often work with intermediate "texts", such as scenarios, scripts, drafts etc. The work is mostly done in order to produce and broadcast products with a limited lifespan. However, this does not mean that the translation quality can be overlooked. Due to its vulnerability, Cattrysse suggested avoiding its potential failure by checking with graphic designers in the respective target culture(s), to learn whether the visuals are offensive or not, and whether they are well understood. (1992: 6) Moreover, Gambier and Gottlieb also gave the criteria applied to multimedia translation as " comprehensibility (the logic of structuring and reading hypertexts is not the logic of a conventional 'text'), accessibility and usability". (2001: xi)

2.1.3 Theories for Multimedia Translation

In spite of fruitful achievements in this field, research in multimedia translation remains difficult for lack of appropriate theoretical frames and methodological tools. We

can easily find that although the approach adopted in multimedia translation study varies· from scholar to scholar, the nature of multimedia translation points to the necessity of interdisciplinary. As Gambier and Gottlieb suggest, it "must open to Communication Studies, Media and Film Studies, Cultural Studies, as well as to Semiotics, Sociology, Anthropology, Information Sciences and Computer Sciences" (2001: xii)

Cattrysse gives an acute analysis of the situation, claiming that "translation studies have evolved from linguistic and literary translation into audio-visual and so-called media translation, and now into *multimedia translation*". (1992:1) Therefore, new perspective should be invited to investigate the relations between the linguistic part and the rest of the multimedia message. Cattrysse suggests that "applying the multilateral mode to a historical functional analysis of all forms of communication, one should expand the· concept even further and outline one common field of study called *comparative communication studies* or *comparative semiotics* (including *comparative semantics* and *comparative pragmatics*)." (6)

Like Cattrysse, Remael also emphasizes the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches, in which the know-how of the other disciplines is brought to use. She stresses that because of the increasing complexity of both textual concepts and text production today, the focus of multimode and multimedia translation studies should first be on descriptive approaches. The interdisciplinary approach will have to make use "not only of the insights gained from various branches of linguistics, but also, at least, of those of media studies and sociology." (2001: 21)

2.2 Past Studies in Subtitling

2.2.1 Definitions and Features of Subtitles

According to Random House Dictionary (1997), subtitle as a noun can have the following meanings:

1) a secondary or subordinate title of a literary work, usually of explanatory character;

2) a repetition of the leading words in the full title of a book at the head of the first page

of text;

3) motion pictures, television;

a) the text of dialogue, speeches, operas, etc., translated into another language and

projected on the lower part of the screen;

b) (in silent motion pictures) a title or caption.

(http://www.infoplease.com/ipd/A0677857.html)

"Subtitles", discussed in this paper, congruous with the above third item of its explanations, is the term used to refer to the translation of foreign dialogues or speeches of films or TV programs; usually displayed at the bottom of the screen. Subtitling is the method or technique of providing subtitles.

According to Dictionary of Translation Studies (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2004:161), subtitling is a term used to refer to one of the two main methods of language transfer used in translating types of mass audio-visual communication such as film and television.

Gottlieb defines subtitling as (1) written, (2) additive (i.e. new verbal material is added in the form of subtitles), (3) immediate, (4) synchronous, and (5) polymodal （i.e. at least two channels are employed.） form of translation.(1992: 162) He distinguishes between different forms of subtitling: from a linguistic viewpoint, there is intra-lingual and inter-lingual translation; whereas technically speaking subtitles can be either open (not optional, i.e. shown with the film) or closed (optional, i.e. shown via teletext). (163)

As Gambier puts it, inter-lingual subtitling "involves moving from the oral dialogue to one/two written lines and from one language to another, sometimes to two other languages (bilingual subtitling, as in Finland, Belgium, Israel, etc.)" (2003:172) The task can be carried out by the same person (translating and spotting) or by a translator and a technician spotting and timing the subtitles. Besides helping the deaf and hard of hearing, intra-lingual subtitling sometimes can also benefit the migrants, for instance, to learn or to improve their command of new language. (174) This paper focuses on inter-lingual subtitling. Some general factors and constraints that influence translator's decision-making in subtitling will be analyzed in the following sections of the paper.

Graphically, subtitles are pasted to the original visual images and sometimes cause minor losses of the integrity of original pictures. In addition, the appearance of these visual words might activate the internal speech or soundless reading of the original film text and actually make it possible for the comprehension of this original film text. In spite of causing the "visual split" in the film viewers, subtitles provide a faster and more convenient way of getting new information and appreciating what we cannot get from the audio dialogue.

2.2.2 Subtitling- A Special Genre of Translation

The film has been greatly welcomed by the public as a popular entertainment medium ever since its invention. The rapid development of photography, digitalization, sound recording and computer-aided design has helped to make films more magnificent and enjoyable. Compared with books, opera and other literature forms, films are more accessible to people. Films are reflections of the unique cultures of different countries. They offer us a window to see how the people of these cultures perceive the world and behave themselves. While film subtitle translation serves as the messenger to help target language viewers to understand foreign films by translating the foreign original sound track.

Gottlieb Henrik put forward the idea of "diagonal translation" in the analysis of the subtitling process. He points out that inter-lingual subtitling, "being two-dimensional 'jaywalks' from source-language speech to target-language writing." (1994:104) Thus the translated subtitles are required to "remain speech characteristics in a written text, especially those in spontaneous speech, such as pauses, false starts, interruptions, ungrammaticalities..." (105-106) The viewers are exposed to both the original and translated subtitles and thus they are required to distribute their attention to "seeing a film" and "reading a film" at the same time.

The uniqueness of the screen texts should be analyzed carefully. "Screen texts", namely, the written or oral documents displayed on TV, cinema or computer screens may

be defined in terms of their volatility: they have a short life, in contrast to static texts that can be used again and again if necessary and distributed over many years for a local market.

The keyword in subtitling is now accessibility, as put forward by Gambier, a concept that covers a variety of features, including:

a) *acceptability,* related to language norms, stylistic choice, rhetorical patterns, terminology, etc;

b) *legibility;* defined in terms of fonts, position of subtitles, subtitle rates, etc;

c) *readability,* defined in terms of reading speed rates, reading habits, text complexity, information density, semantic load, shot changes and speech rates, etc.;

d) *synchronicity,* defined as some agreement between the subtitles, the spoken source language(SL) dialogue, and the corresponding image;

e) *relevance,* in terms of what information is to be conveyed, deleted, added or clarified in order not to increase the cognitive efforts involved in listening or reading;

f) *omestication strategies,* defined in cultural term. An audiovisual product has to be different enough to be "foreign" but similar enough to what viewers are familiar with to retain their attention. In this respect, the needs and expectations of targeted viewers shape the adaptation of the source text. (2003:179)

2.2.3 Constraints of Subtitling

What distinguishes screen translation from other translation forms is that it involves both technical and contextual constraints. These constrains affect the perceived and desired quality of translation and dictate the choices and decisions the translator makes.

Gottlieb discusses what he calls the *formal (quantitative)* and *textual (qualitative)* constraints on television subtitling. *Textual* constraints are those imposed on the subtitles by the visual context of the film, whereas *formal* constraints are the space factor (a

maximum of two lines are allowed, with some 35 characters each) and the time factor. Traditionally 5-6 seconds have been considered to be sufficient for reading a two-liner. (1992:164)

Basil Hatim and Ian Mason summarize four kinds of main constraints on subtitling from a more general perspective (1997:78-79):

a) The shift in mode from speech to writing. This has the result that certain features of speech (non-standard dialect, emphatic devices such as intonation, code-switching and style-shifting, turn-taking) will not automatically be represented in the written form of the target text.

b) Factors which govern the medium or channel in which meaning is to be conveyed. These are physical constraints of available space and the pace of the sound-track dialogue.

c) The reduction of the source text as a consequence of the two factors above. Because of this the translator has to reassess coherence strategies in order to maximize the irretrievability of intended meaning from a more concise target language version.

d) The requirement of matching the visual image. The acoustic and visual images are inseparable in translating, coherence is required between the subtitled text and the moving image itself. Thus, matching the subtitle to what is actually visible on screen may at times create an additional constraint.

Working under so many constraints, the subtitler is faced with great challenges when subtitling a foreign film. His subtitles translations are very easily attacked by peers as well as film viewers. Just like Diaz Cintas said "in other translation practices mistakes can easily pass unnoticed, but here is rarely the case in a mode of translating as uniquely vulnerable as subtitling, always challenged by its concurrent *tertium comparationis.*" （2001:200）

2.2.4 Studies Related to Subtitling Strategies

Through his research on the English subtitling of Chinese TV programs, Li Yunxing suggests that the primary requirement for subtitling is to provide, within constraints of time and space, the most relevant information in the most efficient way. He analyzes the features of subtitling in terms of time-space constraints, informative function and cultural factors and puts forward corresponding strategies for translation, together with some concrete examples for illustration. (2001:38) According to him, subtitlers often need to adopt deduction strategy, which can be subcategorized into condensation, reductive paraphrasing and omission.

To achieve this reduction, translators have to determine what has to be translated and what can be left out. This decision making process is influenced by many factors, including the type of program, the target audience and the aesthetic aspect of the language. Each subtitle has to work both as a unit as well as part of a "larger polysemiotic whole" (Baker, 1998:245).

Similarly, Gottlie Henrik (2001:249) studied the Danish subtitling of English-language television programs and summarized four strategies:

1) total surrender (non-translation of, for instance, cursing and puns in English), thus generating overt Anglicisms;

2) the use of unnatural-sounding English-flavored Danish constructions displaying what could be labeled covert Anglicisms;

3) the use of commonly accepted English loans, adoptions;

4) the use of fully translated dialogue in idiomatic Danish.

If we compare the strategies suggested by Li and Gottlieb, we may notice that their practices are task-dependent, that is to say, the translation task determines the specific strategies. This feature is also illustrated in Anne Jackel's research as introduced in Gambier's article "Multimedia Multilingua" (2001:227). She conducts a systematic analysis of the subtitling of a French film that offers an almost perfect example of every

possible deviation from standard French: sloppy language, bad grammar, misuse of words, use of local colloquialism, slang, Americanism, Arabic etc. and all these are intermingled with funk rhythm. In the subtitled version, certain political and cultural references to French society disappeared while other references were transposed and replaced by American equivalents. For example, the comic book character Asterix became Snoopy, while Les Schtroumpfs (the Smurfs) became Donald Duck. The retail store Darty became Walmart, and dialogue such as ta mere, elle boit de la Kro (for Kronenfourg beer) in the French version became " your mother drinks Bud", (for Budwiser beer) in the American/ English version. Despite the endeavors of the subtitlers, most reviewers concurred that the subtitling was " frankly geared towards the American market." The *independent* complained that the subtitles were too American. (Gambier 2001:227)

Anne's case study provides specific examples of, and raises questions about the role of cultural discount. Besides, it sheds light on how the interpretations by the subtitlers affect a film's reception.

2.2.5　The Studies about Quality Control

How to control the quality in the process of subtitling translation? What are the criteria for making judgments on subtitles? There's no easy and quick answer to these questions. The quality of subtitles is not like " that of microchips or stages in the management of an engineering project, which can be totally standardized." (Mueller, 2001:146) Subtitlers, therefore, should make the linguistic sign (subtitles) as smooth and coherent as possible. It is at its best when the subtitles are not even noticed. As McCormick suggested:

Ultimately, the aim is to fashion subtitles which are attuned so thoroughly to their audiovisual environment that they appear to "melt" into the total fabric of the program. By making the linguistic sign as unobtrusive as possible, the very best subtitling seeks to

foster the illusion of unmediated comprehension on the part of the viewer. When an audience stops being aware of reading the subtitles, the subtitler has achieved a major goal. In effect, the material substance of the subtitles shrinks and vanishes before every eye, leaving only the message. (1997:5)

However, unobtrusiveness is difficult to measure and is thus hardly suitable as a quality standard. Quality in subtitles is not easy to define, but to achieve high quality in subtitling is forever the pursuit of subtitlers. In this domain, several practitioners have worked out their specific methods for providing better subtitles.

Felicity Mueller, a German subtitler and editor of subtitles with Subtitling and Language Services at the SBS Corporation in Sydney, Australia, introduced the standards developed by SBS Subtitling and Language Services for the selection, training monitoring of subtitles and editors of subtitles. According to him, the selection criteria for subtitlers include native-speaker level aural comprehension of all registers of the source language, a high degree of written facility with English, a wide vocabulary in both languages, sound general knowledge and bicultural skills. (Mueller, 2001:144) The other experience Mueller identifies is that in SBS, in the major languages, there is a mixture of native speakers of the source language and native English speakers fluent in that language who can and do consult one another constantly. This kind of interaction can lead to complete understanding of the original utterance and the meaning underlying it and also to finding the best possible equivalent in the target language. (146)

Editors also play a significant role in controlling the quality of the subtitles in SBS. They are often given a subtitled script, and look at the program from the viewers' perspective, checking the sense, grammatical, lexical and semantic correctness, flow and general readability of the subtitles. Whenever they find some problems, they have the right to amend the subtitles or hold a "conference" between themselves and the subtitlers.

As concluded by Mueller, "Quality in subtitling as seen by SBS comes from a combination of measurable standards for the judicious selection, training and monitoring

of the best possible candidates, and some other more subtle standards which are virtually impossible to measure but the absence of which is obvious." (2001:147)

On this issue, Diaz Cintas stressed the importance of a good dialogue list. (2001:200) In essence, a dialogue list is the compilation of the dialogue exchanges that materialize in the film. Such a list is usually supplied by the film distributor or producer and in its ideal format it offers, besides all the dialogues, metatextual information on the implicit socio-cultural connotations, it explains punning, word play and possible " double entendre", explains the meaning of colloquialisms and dialecticisms, elucidates the original and the usage in context of certain terms that may be obscure at first sight, gives the correct spelling of all proper names...and explicit allusions to geographical realities, etc. (200)

As the subtitlers are dealing with a totally different working context where deadlines are very urgent to keep up with, they are surely in a better position to work out a high quality product with the help of a good dialogue list.

Chapter Three   Relevance Theory and the Relevance-based Model of Translation

3.1 An Overview of Relevance Theory

The relevance theory, proposed by Sperber and Wilson, is a new approach to pragmatics. Having shifted the focus of pragmatics from utterance production to utterance comprehension, relevance theory considers verbal communication in terms of philosophy, cognitive psychology and communication theory and views verbal communication basically a cognitive process. So we say that relevance theory falls into the scope of cognitive pragmatics. Relevance theory argues that people make cognitive assumptions to interpret new information, the process of which automatically accords with the principle of relevance. In other words, people are inclined to combine new information with relevant background knowledge in their cognitive environment to interpret utterances and whereby get to know the world. It is a universal goal in communication that the recipient is out to acquire relevant information and the communicator tries to make his utterance as relevant as possible.

In the following parts of this section, a few essential concepts of relevance theory are briefly introduced and discussed.

3.1.1 Context and Mutual Cognitive Environment

Contrary to former pragmatics, which mainly considered context as a variety of visual and concrete factors in the external environment of communication, relevance theory defines context of an utterance to be "the set of premises used in interpreting an utterance". (Sperber & Wilson, 1995:15) As such it is "a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumption about the world". (ibid.) Hence under this definition, context in the relevance-theoretic framework rather refers to part of the hearer's "mental representation of the world", or the so-called "cognitive environment".

The cognitive environment of a person comprises a potentially huge amount of very varied information. It includes 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 furthermore information that can be inferred form these two sources. (Gutt, 1991:26)

In a word, a cognitive environment of an individual is "a set of facts that are manifest to him". (Sperber & Wilson, 1995:39) To be manifest means to be perceptible or inferable. An individual's cognitive environment consists of three kinds of information: encyclopedic information, lexical information and logical information.

Cognitive environments may differ in many aspects from one person to another, because of differences in their physical environments on the one hand and cognitive abilities on the other. Nevertheless, the same facts and assumptions may be manifest in the cognitive environments by two different people. In that case, their cognitive environments intersect. This intersection can be called a mutual cognitive environment. The mutual cognitive environment forms the basis for communication among people.

Communication by nature, in terms of relevance theory, is a cognitive process in which people communicate on the basis of their mutual cognitive environment to achieve contextual effects, modifying the old cognitive environment to form new cognitive environment.

An individual's cognitive environment constitutes a close relationship with his cognitive ability. Generally speaking, the larger an individual's cognitive environment is, the more he can learn new information, which will in turn enlarge his cognitive environment.

Another point of Sperber &Wilson's notion of context is the choice or selection of context. Contrary to the traditional view of context as given and mutually known, context

in the relevance-theoretic framework is dynamic and selected from time to time. Sperber and Wilson assume that any information of an individual's cognitive environment can serve as the potential context of an utterance; but processing information of a particular utterance involves selecting the actual, speaker-intended set of assumptions among all the potential assumptions. Communication requires the use of quite specific assumptions, and misunderstandings are likely to arise when wrong assumptions are used.

Moreover, not all the assumptions available from the potential context are equally accessible on any occasion. In the light of relevance theory, there is a correlation between the accessibility of contextual assumptions in our minds and the efforts required to recall it.

Different degrees of accessibility of contextual assumptions make themselves felt by the amount of effort their retrieval requires in a particular act of communication. This sensitivity to processing efforts is one of the crucial facts that make inferential communication possible: it seems that communication, no doubt like many other human activities, is determined by the desire for optimization of resources, and one aspect of optimization is to keep the efforts spent to a minimum. Applied to context selection, this means that hearers will naturally start out with those contextual assumptions that are most easily accessible to them. The other aspect of optimization is that of obtaining benefits. Relevance theory assumes that—put in very general terms—human beings have a natural interest in improving their understanding of the world around them, this understanding consisting of the assumptions about the world which they have stored in memory. Hence they expect the efforts spent in comprehension will in some way modify the contextual assumptions they brought to the communication act. (Gutt, 1991:26-27)

Gutt further points out that contextual effects can be of three kinds: they can consist in derivation of contextual implications, in the strengthening or confirmation of assumptions already held, or in the elimination of assumptions due to a contradiction. (Gutt, 1991: 27)

3.1.2 Relevance and Optimal Relevance

Relevance theory asserts that the pursuit of relevance, which is believed to be an innate constraint in human psychological make-up, is a constant factor in human communication. The existence of this constant factor makes it possible for an individual, to infer with a modicum of efforts, what other individuals are paying attention to and even what they are thinking. Predictably, people are paying attention to the newly accessible information that seems most relevant to them and are having thoughts inferentially derived by combining this information with the most relevant contextual information available. Sperber and Wilson argue that every act of ostensive communication creates uniquely precise expectations of relevance in others, and "every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance". (Sperber & Wilson, 1995:158) Since relevance is dependent on the interplay of the two factors: contextual effects and processing efforts, an utterance is optimally relevant (a) when it enables the audience to find without unnecessary efforts the meaning intended by the communicator and (b) when that intended meaning is worth the audience's efforts, that is, when it provides contextual effects adequate to the occasion to the audience. The notion "adequate to the occasion" is important because "there is no absolute level of relevance that is adequate to every occasion". (Gutt, 2000:31)

The search for optimal relevance determines the choice of a context in utterance interpretation. It is believed that the context which will most effectively, that is at the least cost, combine with the newly presented assumption to yield maximal contextual effect, is the appropriate one. Hence the claim to optimal relevance can guide the recipient in identifying the speaker-intended context for a given utterance in the following way. Expecting that the contextual information needed for the correct interpretation is readily accessible, and assuming that the utterance, when combined with the right context, will yield an interpretation that is worth the efforts invested in processing it, the recipient will begin the interpretation process from information most readily available to him and proceeds with it until he arrives at an interpretation that fills

both conditions: it is derivable without unnecessary efforts and yields adequate contextual effects. Thus, the search for optimal relevance guides the recipient not only to the speaker-intended context but also to the speaker-intended interpretation.

3.1.3 Ostensive-inferential Communication and Communicative Success

Following relevance theory, verbal communication is an ostensive-inferential process. This process can be explained in this way: on the one hand, the communicator makes manifest to the recipient his intention in the form of ostensive stimulus on the basis of the presumption that her stimulus is optimally relevant to the addressee; on the other, the recipient combines the ostensive stimulus with the contextual assumptions, particularly, the mutually manifest contextual assumptions, to construct the possible interpretive hypotheses about the communicator's intention.

Usually, there are two kinds of intention a communicator conveys by his ostensive stimulus. One is informative intention, i.e., the linguistic meaning of his utterance; the other is communicative intention, i.e., the conversational/pragmatic meaning of his utterance. In order for the communication to be successful, the communicator needs, first of all, to have his communicative intention realized. Relevance theory asserts that the communicator, whether expressing his meaning explicitly or implicitly, can always provide through ostension some relevant information and contextual assumptions for the recipient to make inference. Under the guidance of the principle of relevance, the recipient, by combining his contextual assumptions with the stimulus, infers the communicator's intention and whereby achieves the contextual effects.

The ostensive-inferential communicative process, as observed by Sperber and Wilson, is not something symmetrically co-ordinate, but rather something asymmetrical, where more responsibility lies with the communicator than with the audience:

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. (Sperber and Wilson, 1995:43)

The fulfillment of this condition is crucial, since the audience have no other means by which to determine what the communicator intends to communicate. Therefore, in order to make the communication successful, the communicator must have a correct evaluation of the recipient's cognitive environment and make every effort to coordinate his intentions with the recipient's expectations. Practically speaking, communicative success is a relative concept, for every recipient's cognitive environment is somewhat different so that they will not arrive at the same conclusion of the communicator's intention. In this sense, we say that the relevance principle is the precondition of communicative success but does not guarantee it. Accordingly, to achieve the optimal relevance and the optimization of contextual effects can only be considered as the ultimate aim of communication. Communication is thus a dynamic process of evaluation, adjustment and adaptation.

3.2 A Relevance-Theoretic Approach to Translation

What's the nature of translation? Is relevance theory applicable to translation studies? How does the principle of relevance guide translators in their practice? Under relevance-theoretic framework, translation can be deemed both as cross-cultural communication and interpretive resemblance of language. As one special form of communication, it observes the general principles of communication. In other words, translation is also constrained by the principle of relevance. In this chapter, we will discuss in detail how relevance theory generally accounts for translation, which is considered as a complex form of communication.

3.2.1 Translation as an Interpretive Resemblance of Source Text

Our everyday experience tells us that people do not always directly say what they mean. Cases in point are the use of euphemisms, metaphors, metonymies, exaggeration, etc in human communication. For example, we say that we have a thousand things to do when, in fact, we can just list some twenty or thirty jobs; or we talk about someone being "a real gangster" when we do not mean to imply that he has committed actual crimes but are perhaps expressing our attitude to the way he goes about his business; normally this does not cause any problem but is understood in the intended way (Gutt, 1991: 35).

The way relevance theory accounts for such message transmitting is by claiming that the relationship between what people say and the message they intend to communicate is one of interpretive resemblance, in other words, what they say interpretively resembles what they intend to communicate. In terms of relevance theory, the presentation of the author's ideas of a book is an instance of interpretive use: the statements that summarize those ideas are presented because they interpretively resemble the statements of the original author.

An ideal translation has a complete interpretive resemblance to the original. It is supposed to meet this criterion: a translation should communicate the same interpretation as that intended in the original. This means that it should convey to the receptors all and only those explicatures and implicatures that the original was intended to convey. (Gutt, 1991:99) That is, the explicatures of the translation should be the same as the explicatures of the original; and the implicatures of the translation should be the same as the implicatures of the original. However, it is not difficult to find that complete resemblance can hardly be achieved: the preservation of a given explicature may not necessarily lead to the derivation of the original-author-intended implicature because of the different cognitive environments. Even from intra-lingual experience we know that we cannot necessarily communicate the same thoughts to just anybody, regardless of their background knowledge. It is often quoted that one thousand readers will arrive at one thousand interpretations of Shakespeare's Hamlet. This is true in the case of the

native readers; let alone foreign readers whose cultural backgrounds vary greatly from those of the native.

Therefore, how can a translator justify his translation? In what respects should a translated text resemble the original? The answer is it should achieve interpretive resemblance to the original in relevant aspects. That is to say the translation should resemble the original in respects that make it adequately relevant to the audience by offering adequate contextual effects and at the same time the translation should be expressed in such a manner that it yields the intended interpretation in an economical way, involving optimal expenditure of processing efforts on the part of the target reader.

So what the translator has to do in order to communicate successfully is to arrive at the intended interpretation of the original, and then to interpretively resemble the original in correspondence with the principle of relevance for his target audience. Nothing else is needed. To put it more generally, in interpretive resemblance the principle of relevance comes as a presumption of optimal resemblance: what the translator intends to convey is presumed to interpretively resemble the original, and the resemblance it shows is to be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance. In other words, translation is presumed to resemble the original closely enough in relevant respects and have adequate contextual effects without gratuitous processing efforts (Gutt, 1991:112). If the translator cannot preserve all the explicatures and implicatures but have to make a choice, consistency with the principle of relevance would require that he give priority to a rendering that will achieve optimal relevance.

3.2.2 Translation as an Act of Cross-cultural Communication

Translation, in essence, is a kind of two-stage communication activity, involving the communication between the source text writer and the translator, and the communication between the translator and the target reader, and they are all guided by optimal relevance. In this two-stage communication, the translator is the addressee of the original writer and the addresser of the target reader, so the responsibility for avoiding misunderstanding lies

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in him. As a translator he should always keep this in mind: his translation should not only convey the optimal intention of the original but also meet the optimal expectation of the target reader.

It is just because we look upon translation as communicative activity that we judge the success of translation by the standard of communication. Translation is a complete communicative process, whose ultimate aim is to make target readers acquire the information in the original text. The process should include translator's comprehension of the original text and above all, how the translator gets across his understanding to the target reader. Therefore, the task of the translator is to ensure the success of communication through his understanding and expressing of the source text.

In line with relevance theory, the source language communicator, i.e., the original author, bears responsibility that the set of assumptions he intends to make manifest to the audience is optimally relevant with enough contextual effect and costing no gratuitous processing efforts. Therefore, the translator, as an audience of the original communicator, has to identify the mutual cognitive environment shared by the author and his intended readers and work out the author's intended meaning. The translator produces a target text, the translation, with the intention of communicating to the target readers the same assumptions that the original writer intends to convey to the native readers. A translator should always communicate those thoughts of the original interpretation that he believes to be adequately relevant, and he should express himself in such a way that the target readers will be able to recover those thoughts in consistency with the principle of relevance. What the target readers need to do is to go ahead with processing. They can expect that the interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance will be the one intended by the source text writer. So, as a form of communication, translation should meet one requirement at least: to guarantee the success of communication.

3.2.3 Translation as a Process of Transferring Optimal Relevance

What is translation and what is standard of translation? What principles should a

translator conform to? Should translation be free or literal, domesticated or foreignized? Translation theorists from home and abroad have been arguing with each other over such age-old topics for about 2000 years. Savory's widely-quoted list of pair-wise contradictory translation principles may well bring out the translator's dilemma:

1) A translation must give the words of the original.

2) A translation must give the ideas of the original.

3) A translation should read like original work.

4) A translation should read like a translation.

5) A translation should reflect the style of the original.

6) A translation should possess the style of the translator.

7) A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.

8) A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.

9) A translation may add to or omit from the original.

10) A translation may never add to or omit from the original.

11) A translation of verse should be in prose.

12) A translation of verse should be in verse.

<div align="center">(Gutt, 1991:127)</div>

The result of those arguments is disappointing: it seems that there are no universally agreed criteria for translators to follow, because those qualified to formulate them have never agreed among themselves.

In China, Yan Fu's translation principle--"faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance", which has dominated Chinese translation research for about 100 years, has been frequently challenged since the introduction of western modern translation theories in recent decades, especially after the introduction of the equivalence-based theories, which brought Chinese translation studies to a new thriving stage. However, in recent years, the notion of equivalence itself is now being challenged with varying degrees of enthusiasm: J.C. Catford's "utterance equivalence" and "functional equivalence", Nida's "dynamic equivalence" so on and so forth.

While translation theorists debate about the standards of translation, the development of pragmatics studies, especially relevance theory has thrown new light on translation studies. Relevance theory and translation studies have something overlapping, especially when translation is viewed as communication.

We have already discussed that relevance theory is one of the most advanced theories to study communication, and it has gained wide acceptance, so it naturally comes that translation, as a kind of cross-cultural communication, can also be guided under the framework of this theory. Since relevance theory tries to give an explicit account of how the information-processing faculties of our mind enable us to communicate with one another, the significance of applying relevance theory to translation lies in its explicit emphasis on the study of the mental process of the translator when doing translation. It is generally agreed by any translation theory that a correct understanding of the original text is a precondition for making a good translation. But, almost every utterance in natural language has a variety of possible interpretations, which constitutes difficulties for a correct understanding. So how can a translator capture the right one, that is, the source text writer's intended meaning? We claim that such problems can be solved by resorting to the principle of relevance: every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995:260).

Therefore we can see that the goal of human communication is to achieve optimal relevance and there is only one right optimal relevance in every ostensive utterance. As far as translation is concerned, optimal relevance is what the translator aims at and the target readers expect. As an ostensive communicator, the translator, by producing the translation, creates an expectation of optimal relevance, that is, his translation will help the reader yield the intended interpretation by the original writer without gratuitous processing efforts. The target reader can expect that by optimal processing, he can derive the intended meaning embedded in the original. So the translator is responsible for conveying the intention of the original communicator as well as satisfying the

expectation of the target reader. For such a specific purpose, the translator is responsible for double inferences. First of all, he has to find out the search for optimal relevance and the intention from the source text, namely what contextual assumptions the author tries to convey to the native reader. Then he has to make assumptions about the target reader's processing abilities and contextual resources and especially their expectation of the optimal relevance. In this two-stage communication, a translator acts both as an addressee and an addresser. Therefore, we argue that the key to achieve the success of this two-stage communication, i.e., the translation, depends to a large extent on the transfer of optimal relevance from the source text to the target text.

Chapter Four   Relevance Theory and Subtitles Translation

4.1 The Feasibility of a Relevance Theoretic Approach to Subtitles Translation

Good translation should serve as a solid "bridge" between source language speaker and target language audience. It can faithfully transfer the meanings of the original and bring the target language audience equivalent communicative effects.

As for the subtitles translation, it becomes more significant for the subtitler to achieve this goal. The purpose of subtitling a film or TV program is to help the target language viewers to gain a good understanding of the original by translating the audio source language into the written target language and putting it on the screen. Good subtitles should be melt into the original film and bring enjoyment to the viewers, while bad or poor ones irritate the viewers and spoil their entertainment pleasure.

It is altogether possible and proper to study subtitle translation in the theoretical framework of relevance theory. First of all, in accordance with the propositions in the theoretical framework of relevance theory, translation is considered to be an act of communication between translator and target audience. The translator needs to get the communication successful by making the target audience recognize what he intends to communicate, namely, by making the target audience recognize the messages contained in the original text. As part of translation categories, subtitle translation can also be considered as a part of communication between the original film transcript makers and the target language viewers. Hence as the cognitive theory of human communications, relevance theory, can surly be applied in the study of subtitle translation.

4.2 Optimal Relevance in Subtitling

Relevance theory focuses on cognition and communication. Film viewing is, in its nature, a process of cognition and communication. In terms of cognition, film viewing

can be seen as the viewers' cognition of poly-semiotic text. In terms of communication, film viewing can be seen as the communication between the filmmaker and the audience. So the principle of relevance can be applied to film viewing without any doubts.

With regard to subtitling, firstly we have to identify the role which subtitles play in the film viewing process. In a subtitled film, the information load is shifted from the verbal acoustic to the verbal visual channel. The shift in information load will cause a corresponding shift in the viewers' attention. As a result, the viewers have to pay more attention to the visual side and the burden on the visual side will increase.

However, film viewing is a comprehensive aesthetic process. Any one-sided focus will cause damage to the aesthetic experience. And due to the time and space constraints on subtitling, the energy that the viewers can allocate to read the subtitles is quite limited. In film viewing, the image and the sound are most important. They are the essence of film art. It is out of this consideration that subtitles are preferred to dubbing. Subtitles can preserve the artistic value of films to the uttermost. It neither damages the image nor the sound. However, the presence of subtitles is a constant disruption in film viewing. Lengthy and hard to comprehend subtitles are notoriously rejected by viewers. Thus, if the processing efforts spent on subtitling can be reduced to a minimum without distorting the original meaning, film viewing can be much more entertaining.

So the best condition is when the visual burden imposed by subtitles is kept to a minimum and at the same time, subtitles can implement their functions in the multimedia context. That is to say, subtitles must be relevant enough to keep the consistency between image flows.

The principle of relevance is a perfect theoretical explanation of subtitling comprehension. We can conclude that relevance in subtitling is: (a) the contextual effects of the subtitles are large, which means subtitles fit best into the image flow and keep the consistency in between. (b) the processing efforts spent on subtitles is small. And the optimal relevance in subtitling is when the subtitle can achieve largest contextual effects with minimum processing efforts. In other words, subtitles should provide the best

consistency within the image flow and cause no unjustified processing efforts on the viewers' side.

Thus, subtitling can be evaluated by its degree of relevance and good subtitles should achieve the optimal relevance. Relevance, to a large extent, is assessed against the cognitive environment. In the following segment, we will discuss the special cognitive environment of film viewers.

4.3 The Cognitive Environment in Film viewing

The technical definition of cognitive environment is as follows: "A cognitive environment of an individual is a set of facts that are manifest to him"(Sperber and Wilson 1995: 39). Gutt further explained the concept of cognitive environment, saying "it includes 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 furthermore information that can be inferred from these two sources" (Gutt, 2000: 27). From Gutt's description, we can see that cognitive environment covers a large scope of knowledge, ranging from immediate context to cultural awareness.

In film viewing, the viewers are faced with a poly-semiotic context, consisting of information from both visual and verbal channels. The cognitive environment in deciphering a piece of film image can be divided into four categories: linguistic background, cultural background, generic background and immediate context. Linguistic background refers to the language which the viewer speaks, and the related norms in that language. Cultural background refers to a person's cultural identity. It owes much to the origin culture of the viewer, and also includes that person's awareness of other cultures. Generic knowledge refers to a person's knowledge about a certain genre. For example, people who are more accustomed to film language tend to have a better understanding of foreign films. Knowledge about cinematography, about a certain type of films or about

the director constitutes a part of the generic knowledge as well. The above three kinds of knowledge forms the basis of a viewers' capacity of understanding film language. The immediate context is where the actual inferences take place. The immediate context in film viewing contains the following aspects:

1) information presented through the non-verbal visual channel or the picture;

2) information presented through the verbal visual channel, the subtitles;

3) information presented through the verbal-audio channel (tones, pitches, etc.);

4) information presented through the non-verbal audio channel (background, noises, music, etc.);

5) expectations derived from previous viewing.

From the previous listing, we can see that subtitles function in a very special cognitive environment. It differs from conventional cognitive environments in that. it contains many channels of information. The aids of audio-visual information in understanding are sometimes tremendous. Information from the previous viewing experience, which is stored in the viewers' .memory, can provide a context for understanding, too.

Chapter Five   Main Methods of the Translation of Subtitles

The technical constraints, namely, the space and time constraints, have a general effect on the subtitling methods. As we pointed out, mainly due to the space and time constraints, the principle of economy should be properly followed under the guidance of relevance theory.

As a result, reduction methods are generally expected in the process of subtitle translation. The subtitler usually tends to select the more condensed translation and reject elements that are considered to be superfluous. Supported by the original picture, music and other sound effects, reduction of subtitles can be relatively easily reached without lots of qualitative losses in the intended information. In other words, subtitle translation will usually allow proper reduction in the transfer of the information to the target language audience. These reduction methods mainly include condensation and omission.

But it is worth noting that reduction methods may not suit all situations in subtitle translation. Thus if reduction brings confusion, misunderstanding or other comprehension problems, we need to resort to the method of addition within the space and time constraints.

Besides, because of different language structures and related cultural backgrounds, which are important parts of the cognitive environment, the explicatures and implicatures of the same prepositional content may differ in different languages. As a result, when inter-lingual communication takes place, the proper handling of the explicit meaning and the implicit meaning of the utterance should not be overlooked. This is particularly important when translating cultural images in subtitles as the implicit meaning of the cultural image in another language often differs from the original one. Thus in subtitle translation, proper substitution and paraphrasing are of great importance. The following parts will demonstrate these methods with examples.

5.1 Condensation

The time and space for subtitles are rather limited; therefore, the method of condensation is always applied. And the constraints would become particularly intense because of the extremely quick delivering speed when the speaker is in a desperate or emergent situation or in frantic or sometimes excited mood. In this case, generally speaking, not every word is important, so the condensation of the vital information in the translated subtitles is necessary. The subtitler needs to distinguish the vital or important information from some supplementary or padding information. And he needs to only present the vital information in his subtitles, neglecting the other minor information.

①鲁老太爷是朝内的大宫，又是三代翰林。

— (《卧虎藏龙》)

The Gous are <u>a very powerful family</u>.

— (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*)

Hanlin(翰林)is member of the imperial academy, which are composed of title winners in nation-wide examination in ancient China. By mentioning Hanlin, the screenwriter means that the Gous are not only influential, but also have a scholarly family tradition. According to relevance theory, in conducting dialogue, the processing efforts must be small and effects large for the interlocutors. As the Chinese audience and English-speaking audience have a great disparity in terms of cultural backgrounds, these kinds of culturally loaded words and expressions will put a lot of processing efforts on the part of the target audience, which is worsened in the special contexts of film. If we translated this sentence literally — "Master Gou is a high-ranking official in the court, and the Gous are members of the imperial academy for three generations." , the viewers would surely lose much visual and audio information as they devote too much effort in reading the subtitles. By condensing the information into "a very powerful family", the

subtitlers offered the information with the optimal relevance to the viewers.

②秦王：三年前，寡人曾与他们有过一战。

在寡人看来这二人<u>光明磊落,气度不凡</u>。

—(《英雄》)

Emperor Qin: Three years ago they stormed the palace.

I was impressed by their <u>**valor and dignity**</u>.

— (*Hero*)

Emperor Qin, who suspects the story told by Nameless, tells him his impression of Broken Sword and Flying Snow to prove that they are not the sort of person described by Nameless."光明磊落"means open and aboveboard; and"气度不凡"means in a laudable tolerant spirit. In the English subtitle, they are condensed into valor and dignity for the sake of a simpler and shorter sentence. Sometimes set phrases in Chinese are heavily culturally-loaded. They carry abundant information with few words and reflect profound thoughts which are too complex for the foreign viewers to follow. In subtitle translation, usually they are not translated literally; rather the main ideas are kept while the relatively unimportant ones are cut off. The succinct translation helps the viewers effectively comprehend the speaker's intention with minimum processing efforts.

③刘元：你以为我是张嘴就来啊？

我教的这些都是经过几宿没睡琢磨出来的。

<u>孩子们的学习热情空前高涨，课堂活跃，没睡觉没走神的。</u>

—(《不见不散》)

Liuyuan: You think I just blabber，

but it took me a long time to come up with this.

<u>**The kids love it and don't nod off.**</u>

—(*Be There or Be Square*)

The literal translation of the underlined sentence should be "The children's enthusiasm in study is unprecedentedly high and they are very active in class. No students nod off or wander off." Those words contain repetitious and over-elaborate formalities. Actually there is no need to list all the factors in the subtitle; otherwise the foreign viewers might find it dizzy and hard to process them. Therefore, the subtitler simplified the effect and made the subtitle concise and comprehensive, which reduces the viewers' processing efforts.

5.2 Omission

As the limited screen space and pressing comprehension time determine the fact that film subtitles should be concise and easy to comprehend, omission is another method used to keep the central message that moves the story on while neglecting some peripheral or redundant information. It helps to make the lines concise by deducing many distracting and unnecessary words.

①刺客残剑，刺客飞雪

素来联手行刺

有诛杀二人中任何一人者

赏万金，封五千户侯

上殿十步，与王对饮

— (《英雄》)

Flying Snow—and Broken Sword

Have teamed up for assassination

He who kills either of them

will receive gold and land

and be allowed to drink

within 10 paces of His Majesty

— (*Hero*)

The identity of Flying Snow and Broken Sword can be inferred from the word "assassination" at the end of the sentence. "Assassination" is clear enough to help viewers achieve the largest contextual effects. So in the English version the word"刺客", which is assassinator, is omitted.

②尤优:不可能!

泰勒没情人!他这岁数，就是有这心也没这力了…

您这创意搁道格拉斯葬礼上倒差不多。

— (《大腕的葬礼》)

You You: Impossible!

At his age? Maybe for Clinton's funeral.

—(*Big Shot's Funeral*)·

In order to get funded for the funeral, Louis and You You had a negotiation with Producer Zhang, who promised to pay 5 million for the event on the condition that they should provide sufficient camera coverage on his newly selected actress. The actress should be presented as the big shot's mistress. You You respected Tyler as a talented director and respectable man, so he disproved the villainous proposal which clearly would bring shame on Tyler. He even mischievously denied the possibility by judging that "it is impossible for Tyler to have sexual conduct with a mistress because he is so old. Therefore, he could not have a mistress".

It's common knowledge that senior people's venereal capability greatly declines. In Chinese people's minds, people in the 60s or 70s usually could not perform sexual acts. They usually spend their time and energy on other leisure interests. It is very rare to find an old man with a mistress in Chinese culture. However, western people, especially the Americans, consider sex as one of the most important human needs. Their physical conditions and sex culture determine the fact that it is never too old to have sex. So the

underlined part of Chinese original should not be literally translated into "At his age, even if he wants to have a mistress he could not manage to perform sexual conduct." Otherwise, the foreign viewers might frown at the subtitles and laugh at You You's stupidity. The other reason is that talking about others' sexual capability directly seems to be inappropriate. The subtitler reserved You You's meaning, but he omitted the specific reason of the fact. In the context, the communication clues are sufficient enough for the viewers to comprehend You You's intentions. Meanwhile, there is not any direct explanation on Tyler's sexual capability.

③刘元:辞了这破工作。

李清:辞了这工作我喝西北风去呀?

—(《不见不散》)

Liu Quan: You can quit your job.

Li Qing: **And then what?**

— (*Be There or Be Square*)

Li Qing made a hard living in the U.S by doing cleaning work in an exhibition hall of BMW motor. All her life depended on these meager wages. Deep in her heart, she hated the joyless work. But in order to survive, she had no choice. On hearing Liu Yuan's request that she should quit the job, she felt surprised and helpless. She did not want to lose the only "lifesaving straw", so she subconsciously uttered the sentence to show her situation and attitude. For English viewers, the direct rendering "Should I drink northwest wind if I quit this job?" makes no sense. They might even consider the subtitle as an incorrect translation because it does not fit in with their logic. The subtitler predicted the incomprehensibility of the original, and he thus omitted the cultural expression. The viewers need not know the specific terms of Chinese expressions. In the subtitles, he made explicit Li Qing's intention. "And then what?" can carry the meaning—if I quit my job as you suggested, then what shall I do? Or—if I quit my job as you suggested, then

what better job can you offer me? Either of them makes sense and the English viewers can get the original meaning easily.

④羊搞: 来一回让米兰也开开眼,

　　下来我给你两包牡丹过滤。

刘忆苦:玩去两包。

羊搞: 再加两包凤凰过滤。

—(《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Yang Gao: Come on, show her!
　　　　　We'll give you two packs of cigarettes.
Liu Yiku: Get lost. Just two?

Yang Gao: **Plus two packs of filters.**

—(*In the Heat of the Sun*)

This is the scene in which Yang Gao tried to talk Liu Yiku into climbing the big stack. He firstly used two packs of cigarettes as the bait, then increased it to four. What's omitted in the subtitle is the brand of cigarettes. "peony" and "phoenix" are two famous cigarette brands in China during that age. Yang Gao's intention in explicating the brand name is to increase the charm of the bait. However, foreign audience may never have heard of the two brands. If literally translated, the subtitle cannot achieve the same effect in a foreign context. Again, the viewer's perception and the issue of conciseness are taken into consideration in the subtitle.

Since the words deleted are not so important, they will not hinder the understanding of the whole story; the sentences thus become shorter and briefer and take less time and energy from the viewers so that they can enjoy the film more. The reasons why the translator treated the words this way are: firstly, it is neither the director's intention to focus on dialogues nor foreign audience's expectation to know exactly what's been said on the screen, nor even the sentences about the knowledge of China; Secondly, the technical constraints of subtitles demands them be as concise and brief under the precondition of

understandability.

5.3 Addition

As we have stated above, due to the space and time constraints of subtitle translation, the main methods employed in subtitle translation are reduction ones like condensation or omission which we have already demonstrated above. But occasionally, the reduction of the information of the original utterance will harm the comprehension for the target language audience, because the provided context of the original utterance would be not enough for the target audience to acquire adequate contextual effects without demanding processing efforts. Therefore, in order to add necessary information needed to process the subtitles, the method of addition should be employed sometimes. For example:

①无名：大王，这一剑臣必须刺

刺了这一剑

很多人都会死

而大王会活着

<u>死去的人请大王记住</u>

<u>那最高的境界</u>

一(《英雄》)

Nameless: Your Majesty, your visions have convinced me

That you are committed to the highest ideal

Of ultimate swordsmanship

Therefore I cannot kill you

Remember those who gave their lives

<u>**For the highest ideal: peace**</u>

— (*Hero*)

After hearing Emperor Qin's understanding of swordsmanship's ultimate ideal,

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Nameless decides that he can't kill him since he is the one to bring peace to the people. But his expression is made to be quite obscure and misleading in order to form suspense. Audience will quickly understand the true meaning of his words as it is unveiled by the following action of Nameless. If this sentence were translated literally, the English viewers would have to spend more processing efforts figuring out the real intention of Nameless, thus slowing down their reading speed and disturbing their understanding of the following story. So the English version made almost a thorough change of the expression, making the implied meaning explicit so as to provide the best consistency within the image flow and cause no unjustified processing efforts on the viewers' side.

②尤优: <u>你要是不怕那什么，就先住我这儿。</u>

不是，我不是这意思。

我是说住宾馆还是贵，费钱。

我也不是说你没钱，你有的是钱。

这不是钱的事，那什么，我是说你……

你这儿也没朋友.你要是不怕那什么……

我要说什么来着?

露西: 你可不可以过来抱抱我?

— (《大腕的婚礼》)

YouYou: <u>Stay if you don't care about sleeping with me.</u>

No, that's not what 1 mean.

I mean, hotels aren't cheap.

Not that you don' t have money, because I'm sure you do.

It' s not the money, it' s just—

So if you don' t care about, you know—if you' re not afraid—

What the hell am I talking about?

Lucy: Could you come here and hug me?

— (*The Big Shot's Funeral*)

Tylor was very sick, so the film shooting had to be canceled. Lucy (Tylor's personal assistant) was so short of money that she had to leave the hotel and find somewhere else to live. On a heavily raining night, You You helped Lucy to move her luggage to his home and made some hot soup for her to drink. This conversation took place when Lucky was having the soup. You You's words sounded quite redundant and disorganized. In light of the context, You You and Lucy were getting closer in relationship. You You was actually trying to persuade Lucy to stay at his house, but it's too embarrassed for him to pop up this suggestion. Therefore, he used vague words to give Lucy a hint. Contrary to Chinese viewers who are familiar with such vague expressions, foreign viewers would be confused if the sentence underlined is literally put into "If you're not afraid of that, you can stay here." To reduce their processing efforts and achieve the optimal relevance of the subtitles, appropriate words "sleep with me" should be added to make the speaker's intention clear.

③马晓军: 九大以后

　　　　我爸爸他们部队接受了新任务

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　—(《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Ma Xiaojun: **After the 9th Party Congress in 1969,**

　　　　My father was sent to Guizhou as an army rep.

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　— (*In the Heat of the Sun*)

With the phrase "after the 9th congress", the scriptwriter's communicative intention is to tell the viewers the background against which the story took place. The ninth party congress was held on April 1st in 1969 and was an important event during the Cultural Revolution. The whole country was in chaos. College students were sent to villages and mountains to be reeducated; the red guards were all across the country, fighting between different gangs. The communicative intention behind the phrase "after the 9th congress" is to reveal to the audience the chaotic historical background of this story. This

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communicative intention can be easily inferred by Chinese audience. Anybody who possesses a general knowledge of Chinese history can recognize what the ninth party congress means.

However, for the foreign audience, who are not familiar with the political background of China during the Cultural Revolution and in no way should know when the 9th party congress was held, understanding the communicative intention would be difficult. The word "九大", if translated literally as "the ninth congress", would cause misunderstanding in the foreign audience, since the ninth party congress is of little relevance to their cognitive environments and their presumptions about the world. So the translators added a piece of information to the end and expanded it to "the 9th party congress in 1969". With the time of the congress specified, the phrase increased its relevance to the foreign viewers' presumptions about the world. Thus the viewers can reduce the processing efforts on this phrase and achieve a relatively larger contextual effect.

5.4 Substitution

Since there is a wide cultural gap between English and Chinese, it is impossible, in all cases, to establish socio-cultural equivalence by introducing foreign culture in a way that is acceptable to the receptor of the target language. Some expressions or phrases are peculiar to one culture. They will either clash with or make no sense in the target language. The differences in culture give rise to different associations and different attitudes towards these expressions. An ideal way of dealing with this problem in subtitle translation is to find a substitutive expression in the target language.

①等改完了剧本，<u>你再唱你的西厢记或再唱你的陈世美</u>。

— (《一声叹息》)

Liu Dawei: After finishing the script <u>you can play out your "Casablanca" thing</u>.

— (*Sigh*)

"西厢记"is a Chinese opera which describes the true love between the young people. "陈世美" represents in the opera a heartless man who wickedly abandoned his wife in order to marry the emperor's daughter. Liang Yazhou fell in love with a young lady, and he thus betrayed his wife. For him, he was acting "西厢记" with his mistress and "陈世美" with his wife. Liu Dawei said this to Liang Yazhou and criticized him for his unfaithfulness. The subtitler did not literally translate the two terms literally, nor did he make efforts to interpret them. (Like "Lover's tales" and "Wicked husband") He simply compared them to "Casablanca", which is well known to western viewers. And the plot is congruous with the Chinese original. This kind of techniques can find explanations in relevance theory as the optimal relevance. For the viewers, the information that is optimally relevant should have two conditions: a) sufficient relevance, thus worth the viewer's processing efforts, b) being coherent with the speaker's capability and linguistic preference. The bridging of context could greatly generate more relevant information, making the comprehension much easier.

②警察：德行，还镇王府井。

镇动物园，镇地安门。

— (《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Policeman: Look at you; you think half of Peking is your turf.

—(*In the Heat of the Sun*)

③马小军: 我镇东单，镇西单。

我还镇你们炮局呢。

— (《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Ma Xiaojun: I'm the king of half of Peking.

and of your station as well.

—(*In the Heat of the Sun*)

Ma Xiaojun was caught by the police when he hung around the exhibition hall. In the detention room, the police was interrogating him. As a matter of fact, Xiaojun hadn't committed any crime. The policeman was just trying to scare him away. During the interrogation, the policeman mentioned several places in Beijing: Wangfujing, Dongwuyuan, and Di'anmen. Those places are familiar names in China. Almost all Chinese know there are such places in Beijing. Nevertheless, these names are of little relevance in a foreign context, since foreigners are in no way supposed to know them. They have to ponder upon them when viewing. To reduce the processing time and achieve optimal relevance, the subtitle uses "half of Peking" to replace those proper nouns. Peking, from any perspective, is familiar to foreign viewers since it is the capital of China. "Half of Beijing" successfully transferred the original message of the policeman. In example 3, likewise, "Dongdan" and "Xidan" are rendered as "half of Peking".

④妈妈:从小看到大，你就跟你那贼爸爸是一路货色呀你。

— (《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Mom: I can see your father in you and you in him. **Peas out of the same rotten pod you are.**

—(*In the Heat of the Sun*)

⑤胡老师:你这些害群之马。

— (《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Miss Hu: **You rotten apple!**

—(*In the Heat of the Sun*)

In example 4 and 5 Chinese idioms are replaced by rough equivalents in English. "一路货色"——"The same kind of goods" is rendered to "peas out of the same rotten pot". "害群之马"— "Horses who corrupt the whole herd" is replaced by "rotten apple". The English idioms here are all frequently used in English-speaking countries. The foreign

audience will have little trouble in decoding the English subtitles, thus the processing efforts are kept to a minimum. Since they can convey roughly the same meaning as the original ones, similar contextual effects can be achieved.

⑥关师父:<u>各位爷，多捧场了啊!</u>

— (《霸王别姬》)

Master Guan: <u>**Ladies and gentlemen, enjoy the show!**</u>

— (*Farewell, my Concubine*)

"各位爷" is a conventional Chinese way to address the male spectators respectfully. However, in English, there is no such a counterpart. Therefore, the translator substitutes it with "Ladies and gentlemen", a conventional way of addressing the audience of a performance in English. "多捧场了啊" is also conventional in indicating the beginning of a show and literally means "support our show". However, the English convention has it as "enjoy the show." To reduce the viewers' processing efforts to a minimum, the subtitles are made viewer-oriented so as to best convey the speaker's intention.

Sometimes culture-specific words and unique culture images pose great challenges for the subtitler. How to get Chinese cultures across to the foreign audience and meanwhile do not lay big burden on their mind when they enjoy the film becomes an arduous task that the subtitler must be struggling to complete. Substitution is one way to resolve this problem by taking the viewers' cognitive abilities into account and try to create versions that are adequate for their quick comprehension.

5.5 Paraphrasing

Another way to reduce the misunderstanding caused by cultural difference is to give a brief explanation, that is, by paraphrasing.

①刘元：咱唱一"天仙配"。

—(《不见不散》)

Liu Yuan: Let's sing *The Lover's Melody.*

—(*Be There or Be Square*)

"天仙配" is a classical lyric which belongs to Huangmei Opera. For Chinese viewers, whenever this melody is mentioned, it symbolized the true love between husband and wife. The couple expressed their love and life expectations to each other through the lines of the song. In this example, Li Qing sat in front of a piano, gently pressed the piano keys and made some musical notes randomly. Liu Yuan leaned over on her and suggested: Let us sing "天仙配" .This is a clear implication that Liu Yuan is in love with Li Qing and the flirtation is easily recognized by Li Qing. The foreign viewers do not have to know the specific name of the Chinese song. Literal translation of the name, "The Match of Fairy" could not trigger English viewers' inference system because there is not any relevant background information on this issue. When the viewers find the subtitles are incomprehensible, they have to stop the processing. The subtitler grasped the central meaning of the name and domesticated it into "The Lover's Melody" In relevance theory; we call this process an explication of communication intention. With the traditional culture opera name being made explicit, the viewers can easily infer You You's intention and the communication success is thus guaranteed.

②刘元：你瞅这帮孩子中国话还没说利落呢。

我教他们《荷塘月色》他们也得听得懂啊。

—(《不见不散》)

Liuyuan: Look, these kids can't even speak Chinese freely

How could they understand the sophisticated Chinese essay if I teach them that?

—(*Be There or Be Square*)

Liu Yuan and Li Qing organized several children and taught them Chinese. Liu Yuan did not focus on formal textbooks, but started from daily dialogues. Li Qing could not bear that so she blamed Liu Yuan for his irresponsibility. Liu Yuan had his own explanations. "荷塘月色" is a very beautiful essay written by Chinese essayist Zhu Ziqing. The language is so refined and sophisticated that it is inappropriate for Chinese beginners to learn. You You used the essay name to show that the teacher should not overestimate students' capability and acceptance. It does not matter what essay he mentioned, the only point is that they could not use a sophisticated Chinese essay to teach those kids. The subtitler abstracted the main intention and expressed it in the subtitles. When the viewers watch the subtitles, they need not spend unjustified efforts processing what "Lotus Pond in the Moonlight" means.

③米兰:坐我这儿

　　甭理他们

　　他们的思想太复杂了

— (《阳光灿烂的日子》)

Milan: Come, sit over here.

　　Just ignore them.

　　They've got dirty minds.

—(In the Heat of the Sun)

Milan called Ma Xiaojun to come to her side and ignore his fellows. The reason she gave is "they've got complicated minds". A Chinese viewer can immediately realize the implied meaning of the word "complicated" though it has many implications. In this context, "complicate" is sex-related or porno-related. However, a foreign viewer might have trouble getting this implication for its subtlety. Complicated, as defined in the co-build dictionary, is referring to something which has many parts and hard to deal with. The sexual implication cannot be derived easily in this context. So the subtitler explicates

this implicated meaning with translation "they've got dirty minds". Dirty is the commonly used word in English when referring to sexuality or pornography. This adaptation makes the subtitle come to the largest contextual effects. Some expressions are quite unclear for reasonable considerations, most of the time they are made explicit by the subtitler to minimize the viewers' processing efforts.

④周慕云:病成这样你还去找女人?

　阿炳:想冲冲喜嘛!

<div align="right">— (《花样年华》)</div>

Zhou Muyun: You were in no shape for sex!

A Bing: I thought it would **improve my luck**.

<div align="right">—(In the Mood of Love)</div>

In this example, "冲冲喜"is a typical culture-loaded Chinese phrase. "冲喜"is an old superstitious Chinese custom. When something unlucky happened, the family would hold wedding ceremonies to drive away the evil spirit and expect for good fortunes. A Bing lost money in gambling, so he hoped having sex like that in a wedding would help him to improve his luck. Here by making the phrase explicit, the viewers would spend little processing effort to understand it.

Conclusion

This study focuses on the subtitling translations in which Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory and Gutt's translation theory have been adapted to guide the descriptive and explanatory analysis. In the case study, authentic examples are transcribed from the original film products and then are analyzed based on the relevance-theoretical approach. We tend to categorize some concrete strategies that the subtitler might have consciously or unconsciously considered from the perspective of relevance theory. Examples of translated subtitles are sorted out under the categorizations to support the feasibility of relevance theory in guiding subtitles translation.

During the subtitling translation process, a good subtitler should bear in mind the technical constraints and the viewers' acceptability as well as the subtitle's comprehensibility. Good subtitles should meet all the above-mentioned requirements, and they should be melt into the original film, leaving nothing but enjoyment to the viewers. We have found out that in relevance theory, the two preliminary conditions formulated by the definition of relevance —" (1) an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that its contextual effects in this context are large; (2) an assumption is relevant in a context to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is small could be used to judge the translated subtitles' communicative effects. When these two conditions are satisfied, we should say the subtitles translation" (Sperber &Wilson 1995:125) is consistent with the principle of relevance and successful communication can be guaranteed.

The limited screen space and pressing comprehension time determine the fact that film subtitles should be concise and easy to comprehend. Therefore, condensation or omission seems inevitable in the translation. But there should be some basic rules to follow when the subtitles are translated. The most important guideline is: the translated version should be able to "yield adequate contextual effects at minimal processing efforts". With these requirements could be achieved, the translation work could be guaranteed with

high quality and acceptability. Thus the viewers could fully enjoy the fun of watching a foreign film, and get a full comprehension as if there were nothing between them and the original.

Ever since its creation, relevance theory has shown its intrinsic feasibility for various linguistic domains. Inspired by Gutt's translation theory which incorporates relevance theory with translation, we hope that this study could encourage those who have an interest in film subtitles translation to make further studies in this area. As film translation in China is increasingly pervasive, we are optimistic that film translation studies will flourish.

Due to limited time and resources, and due to the fact that this thesis is a qualitative study, no quantitative survey has been conducted among the target film viewers. All the descriptions about viewers' responses are based on general assumptions.

Another limitation is that only the subtitling of Chinese films is studied in this research.

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从关联理论看中国电影字幕的翻译

作者： 张晶
学位授予单位： 青岛大学