A Brief Analysis on Subtitle Translation of Dune from the Perspective of Cognitive Translatology

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Abstract

With the integration of Chinese and Western culture, film and television works become the window to transmit humanistic thoughts. The sci-fi epic --Dune directed by Denis Villeneuve released in China recently, which offers a mysterious and moving hero's journey. The ingenious storyline, stunning visual effects, and trendy technological elements of the film have won unanimous praise. More amazingly, the subtitle translation is refreshing, providing Chinese audiences with a real aesthetic experience and spiritual resonance. Under the guidance of cognitive translatology, this paper attempts to analyze the cognitive world created by subtitle in Dune, and to explore the effects of subtitle translation from the perspective of embodied view of meaning, interactivity, creativity and "two worlds" of translation, with the aim of exploring subtitle translation skills, broadening the breadth of cognitive translatology and enriching the communication of film and television culture and cultural exchanges between China and the West.

Keywords

Cognitive Translatology; Dune; Subtitle Translation.

1. Introduction

The *Dune* written by American science fiction writer Frank Herbert is the first work to win Hugo Award and Xingyun Award at the same time, and it is also known as the "Best Science Fiction of the 20th Century", which sells well all over the world and sets a sales record of thousands of copies. With the development of film and television technology, this novel bears the dreams of many producers. However, due to its grand scene, special shooting environment, this film would cost high and has great difficulty in adaptation. After many twists and turns, the new version of *Dune*, directed by Dennis Villeneuve, was released in 2021. With its novel and exquisite special effects scenes and advanced scientific and technological synthesis effects, it started a grand space epic masterpiece, which gave the audience a satisfactory answer sheet and achieved high box office results. Across the bridge of translation, subtitlers tell touching movie lines to Chinese audiences through their superb translation skills. With the huge visual impact and sound effects scenes, they attract many Chinese fans, and at the same time convey a novel world outlook and aesthetic experience, which makes subtitling translation of Dune a bright spot. Cognitive translatology is a new paradigm of translation studies. It is a comprehensive interdisciplinary subject integrating cognitive science, neurology, psychology, philosophy, linguistics and artificial intelligence, paying attention to the translator's translation process. From the perspective of embodied view of meaning, interactivity, creativity and "two worlds" of translation on subtitle translation of Dune, this paper studies the cognitive world created by subtitle translation for the audience, and emphasizes the cognitive experience effect of translation.

2. Related Studies on Cognitive Translatology

With the rise of cognitive science, translation researchers have opened the door to explore the translator's subjective world. Translation studies have gradually changed from focusing on translated works to focusing on translators, and from focusing on finished products to focusing on the process, experiencing the cognitive turn of translation studies. In recent years, translation studies have achieved fruitful results in the cognitive field. The term "cognitive translatology" has been formally introduced into translation studies by researchers and is becoming more and more fruitful, providing a new perspective for translation studies.

2.1. Overview of Cognitive Translatology

Cognitive Translatology was first proposed by Spanish translator Martin (2010: 169), but she thinks that it is still in the initial stage, which belongs to the "Pre-paradigm" stage. According to the basic viewpoints of embodied philosophy and cognitive linguistics, Wang Yin, a Chinese scholar, first explained the "cognitive view of translation" in China: "Translation is a cognitive activity, which is based on the cognitive interaction of cognitive subjects with the background of real experience. On the basis of thoroughly understanding all kinds of meanings expressed in the text of the source language (including ancient language), the translator should try his best to map and relay them in the target language, and focus on drawing out the real world and cognitive world that the author wants to describe in the translation. (Wang Yin, 2007) Different from the traditional translation view, translation is not a simple code-switching, but a cognitive activity based on experience, which is embodied, interactive and creative. Translation involves two worlds, the objective real world with language as the main and the subjective cognitive world with thinking as the main. Translators should pay attention to the harmonious interaction between objective world and subjective world, real world and cognitive world, author, text and readers, etc. The discussion on the characteristics of translation from the perspective of cognitive translatology provides translators with the criteria of translation criticism, which is helpful to better improve the translation content.

2.2. Subtitle Translation under the Guidance of Cognitive Translatology

Subtitle refers to the display of non-image content such as character dialogues in film and television works in the form of words, which usually appears at the bottom of the screen and has the characteristics of accuracy, consistency, clarity, readability and equality. It can also be defined as the process of providing synchronous characters for movies and TV dialogues (Shuttle Worth et al., 2004). Subtitles are an important way for film and television works to convey information, and the effect of subtitle translation is directly related to the audience experience, which in turn affects the film and television box office results.

Subtitle translation is different from other text translation. It combines the sound effect and visual experience of movies to create an intuitive feeling for the audience. Because of its special environment, it often has the following characteristics: first, it happens instantly; Subtitle and dialogue of characters is carried out at the same time to achieve the synchronization effect of sound and text, which often disappears in a short time, leaving the audience with a short time to think. Second, the language is easy and simple to understand. Film subtitles are often dialogue-oriented, and the language is colloquial, adapting to the public. Third, unable to comment. Due to the immediacy and colloquialism of subtitles, the culture-loaded words can not be annotated, but can only be handled in an appropriate way.

The research on subtitle translation is in the ascendant. With the development of cognitive science, researchers try to explore the cognitive processing of subtitles from a cognitive perspective, taking into account translator's decision-making and audience's cognitive experience. However, due to the fact that subtitle translation mainly serves the audience's understanding, there is more research on the audience's purposeful translation and less

research on the translator's translation decision. Cognitive translatology holds that translation is experiential, creative, interactive and "two worlds", which provides a standard for the study of subtitle translation criticism.

3. The Cognitive World of Dune

Dune combines politics, religion, ecology, technology, complex conspiracy, social structure and philosophical thinking, and deeply considers the survival and evolution of human beings. The audience can imagine through the sound effects and subtitles of the film, and build a dune world consistent with the film in their own cognitive world. The cognitive world of *Dune* is the inspiration of the original author, and it is also the language environment of the subtitle translation, which is the cognitive world portrayed by the translator for the audience.

3.1. The Humanistic Concept of Dune

(1) Thinking of symbiosis between human beings and environment

The story of *Dune* takes place in the desert environment of fictional space. The House Harkonnen and the House Atreides fight the war over spices in the barren desert planets and the bad environment brought great survival challenges. Only the Fremen who were born and raised in the desert really mastered the survival skills of the desert. This kind of environment setting conveys the idea of "survival of the fittest", which causes the thinking of the relationship between human beings and desert and environment. Also it is a warning to the environmental crisis.

(2) Thinking about human nature and science and technology

The story is set in the future. With the development of science and technology, human beings have achieved planet crossing, but human society is full of conquest, war, aggression and slaughter. Even under the shield of science and technology, the war has become more bloody. Therefore, some netizens commented that it was a story of revenge of the prince in a science fiction coat. It can be seen that people's ideological civilization has not progressed, and science and technology condones the nature of laziness and desire of human nature, so that the film can alert human beings to rationally develop scientific and technological intelligence.

(3) Anti-heroism

However, there is something unusual about this Hollywood blockbuster. It doesn't have superman heroes in Marvel Comics movies which can always save people in sufferings. Paul, the hero of the film, is just an ordinary person, just responding to the call of fate and bearing the expectation of all people. However, he must endure "painful trials", family destruction, etc. in order to reinforce his faith. This anti-heroism setting is actually a betrayal, that is, your hero is not what you expected. The film aims to highlight the history of human development by describing Paul's growth history.

3.2. The Aesthetic Value of Dune

It has to say that Hollywood's industrial level helped Villeneuve establish the aesthetics of "dune", which is not only a masterpiece of science fiction, but also a feast of visual aesthetics.

In every shocking desert scene in the film, the crew went to the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, to take a scene in the high temperature above 40° and sandstorm environment. The magnificent architecture of "ruggedism" in the film is also truly built, which contains complex and diverse artistic elements. What's more, *Dune* is full of retro futuristic costumes, which makes everyone amazing. Its original book describes a special functional costume in the desert-"distill suit" in great detail, which can support people to walk in the hot desert for a long time without losing too much water. Exquisite service can add a lot of points to a film and television work in the eyes of the audience; For the actors, it also played a better role in the filming process. There are

also appearance of the giants like "sand worm" in the film, which give people a strong sense of visual impact, and make the audience realize the vastness of the world and the vastness of the universe. Only by changing the lens one by one can we understand that human beings are so small and the world is so vast.

The core aesthetics of science fiction is surprise aesthetics. Villeneuve found this core, and skillfully combined the conflict of people's own destiny with the grand display of the world and the universe. Of course, human beings are small in front of nature and the universe, but in the end, they always show the greatness of human nature.

4. Cognitive Translation of the Subtitles of Dune

Based on cognitive translatology, embodied view of meaning, interactivity, ,and creativity of *Dune's* subtitle translation shape the cognitive world of dune for the audience, making it achieve harmony and unity with the objective world of the film. Embodied view of meaning is the basis of translation. Interactivity shows the relationship between translation subjects. Creativity is the embodiment of the translator's subjectivity, and the contrast between the cognitive world and the objective world emphasizes the effect of translation.

4.1. Embodied View of Meaning

Based on the theory of embodied philosophy, cognitive translatology emphasizes the subject's experience of real life. Human society is a global community, so human experience of the real world is similar, and thinking patterns and emotions are common, which builds a bridge for cultural exchanges. In the process of translation, the translator's understanding of the text depends on the real experience in the real world. The stronger their experience, the better he can understand the meaning of the text. Experience and cognition precede translation activities, and translation is also the result of experience and cognition. Translators also need to experience the author's feelings and intentions to enrich their cognitive structure. In the subtitled translation of *Dune*, the translator can present the original appearance of *Dune* to the audience only if he has a deep understanding of the dune world that the author wants to build.

Example1 ST: A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care that the balances are correct.

TT：凡事起始之时，必细斟细酌，以保平衡之道准确无误。

Example 2 ST: Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past, I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone, there will be nothing. Only I will remain.

TT1：恐惧是带来彻底毁灭的小小死神。我要直面我的恐惧，让它穿越我的身体。当一切逝去，我将转动内在之眼看清它的轨迹。恐惧所剩无几，唯我独存。

TT2：恐惧会扼杀思维能力。恐惧是潜伏的死神，会彻底毁灭一个人。我要容忍恐惧，我要让它掠过我的心头，穿越我的身心。当这一切过去之后，我将睁开心灵深处的眼睛，审视它的轨迹。恐惧如风，风过无痕，唯有我依然屹立。

Example 1 is a classic line based on the concept of "ecological balance". The subtitle translator clearly understands the connotation of natural balance and experiences which the author wants to convey, so that the original intention can be presented to the target audience in a refined way. Example 2 is the psychological description of Paul, the hero, to soothe his inner fear. Because of his fear of the environment at the bottom of his consciousness, he often has nightmares, and fear is hindering his thinking. The first translation comes from the subtitle translator which is generally consistent with the original intention, providing assistance for the audience to understand. The second translation comes from Gu Bei, a famous translator, who deeply experiences the inner activities of the hero based on the relevant knowledge of "the psychology

of resisting fear", and uses free translation to add psychological charm to the translation, which obviously can infect the audience more.

4.2. Interactivity

Cognitive translatology holds that translation is a cognitive activity based on multiple interactions. These interactions exist between the translator and the source language and the target language. There is also the interaction between the translator and the original author in the objective world and the real world. At the same time, there is the interaction among the original author, translator and reader. The complexity of human cognition and translation itself determines that these interactions are often intertwined and inseparable. A satisfactory translation must be the perfect combination of these interactions. Therefore, when translating film and television works, translators should pay attention to the interaction with authors, audiences, sponsors and other subjects. It is more prominent in the dialogue of interactive characters.

Example 3 ST：Mood? What's mood to do with it? You fight when the necessity arises. No matter the mood. Now, fight!

TT：心情？关心情什么事？战斗是因为需要！跟心情屁关系都没有！现在，战斗！

Example 4 ST：A great man doesn't seek to lead, he is called to it. But if your answer is no, you'd still be the only thing I ever needed you to be: my son.

TT：伟大的人不寻求领导，只是在命运需要时，他响应了召唤。如果你不愿意成为领袖，你也同样是我唯一需要你成为的人：我的儿子。

Example 3 is the teaching of combat coach Gurney to Paul. The translation uses the omission method, effectively avoiding the translationese, being short and powerful, and conforming to Gurney's warrior image. Example 4 is a heart-to-heart talk between Paul's father, Duke Leto, and Paul. Free translation is more in line with the father's tone, making it easier for the audience to understand. Both translations reflect the interaction and adaptation between the translator and the original plot, and give consideration to the audience's viewing experience.

4.3. Creativity

Cognitive translatology holds that translation is creative. Translation activities are based on the translator's understanding, and the translator's subjective initiative affects the creativity of translation. Some scholars even suggest that the translator is the second author. However, creativity in cognitive translatology does not mean abandoning the original work and translating freely or aimlessly. The experiential and interactive nature of translation determines that the translator should be creative in a limited degree, and the translation should also truly restore the original text. Therefore, the creativity of cognitive translatology refers to the translator's creative translation with free translation, compilation and other skills according to his own understanding.

Example 5 ST：Dreams make good stories, but everything important happens when we're awake. Because that's where we make things happen.

TT1：梦是好的故事，但重要的事情都是在我们醒着的时候发生的，因为那是我们创造奇迹的地方。

TT2：梦很重要，但更重要的是醒来的时候，我们创造什么样的现实。

Example 6 ST：The mystery of life isn't a problem to solve. But a reality to experience. A process that cannot be understand by stopping it. We must move with the flow of the process. We must join it. We must float with it.

TT1：生命的奥秘不是要解决的问题，现实的体验才是。这是一个无法暂停来理解的过程，我们必须跟随其行。我们必须加入，顺其自然。

TT2：生命的奥秘并不是要解决某个问题，而是去经历眼前的现实。如果你停滞不前便永远无法参透它，你当跟着它起伏，随波逐流；勇敢踏入其中，随之而动。

Example 5 is Duncan's dialogue with Paul, which is full of philosophical thoughts. The first translation is a literal translation version. It seems too long and procrastinating. In version 2, the translator use adaptation strategy playing the creativity of translation, made the translation concise and expressive. Also, it is more suitable for subtitle typesetting. Example 6 is a narratage with the desert fluctuating scene in the movie. Translation 1 adopts literal translation method. Although there is little difference in meaning, the language repetition is cumbersome and slightly stiff. The second version adopts free translation method, which is more creative, interesting and infectious without losing the interest of lines.

4.4. "Two Worlds"

"Two worlds" refers to the objective world and the cognitive world. The objective world is the social background of the author and the original work; The cognitive world is the world in the author's eyes and the world reflected in his works. When translating, the translator should fully understand the "two worlds" that the author wants to express, and express them clearly in the translation. In Dune, the objective world is a sci-fi planet world conceived by the author Frank Herbert, and its creation source is based on people's real life, so this article contains philosophical thinking of man, nature and human society, which is the cognitive world of the original work. Translators should grasp the harmony of "two worlds" and try to restore the style of the original.

Example 7 ST：Dreams are messages from the deep.

TT：梦是来自内心深处的信息。

Example 8 ST：Who controls the Arrakis, who controls the spice.

And who controls the spice, who controls the Universe.

TT：谁控制了厄拉科斯，谁就掌控了香料。

谁控制了香料，谁就控制了整个宇宙。

The lines in example 7 are the opening and theme of the film Dune. Because the hero lives in the environment of power struggle, he often dreams of mutiny, murder, war and death, and even he being honored as the "savior". He mistakenly thinks that the dream is a prophet, but in fact, on the contrary, he highlights the dream only because of his inner fear. Therefore, the translator directly translates *the deep* into "内心深处", which highlights the original author's own subjective world when conceiving the dune world and echoes the content of the film. Example 8 is the fuse of the movie war plot. It is precisely because of the human world's desire to conquer that it will lead to the struggle in the dune world. Translator's literal translation method shows the plot contradiction in the original author's idea, and strengthens the audience's understanding of the theme of the film.

5. Conclusion

Under the guidance of cognitive translatology, the translation of subtitle in *Dune* combines the translator's own experience, takes into account the interaction and coordination between the text and various subjects, exerts the translator's subjective creativity, makes the audience feel the cognitive world created by the original author and the world of science fiction dune, and leads mankind to explore the future and sublimate the theme. The subtitle translator perfectly conveyed the world of Dune to the Chinese audience, and finally the grand scene ended with "This is just the beginning", which indicated the birth of other dune sequels and drew the audience's expectations. Film and television translation is the media of human culture, which can not be separated from excellent translation by translators. Cognitive translatology explores

the essence of translation from the perspective of human thinking and provides new guidance for subtitle translation.

Acknowledgments

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