



An Analysis of Subtitling Translation in TED Talks from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract. Subtitles are used to translate speech on a video, and they're generally intended for people who don't understand the language of the video. The application of the Skopos translation method in subtitle translation is of great practical significance for improving the subtitle translation of Chinese film and television and the level of cultural exchange. Skopos theory emphasizes on the purpose of the translation activity, the translator should consider about the main target of translation and choose the appropriate translating way according to this target. The study found that TED speech subtitle translation embodies the teleological translation principle in terms of omission, naturalization, and free translation.

Keywords: Subtitling Translation; TED Talks; Skopos Theory

1 Introduction

By 2022, 82% of Internet traffic will consist of video content, according to a study by Cisco. Increasingly, we are becoming more accustomed to watching videos and listening to podcasts, and that's why multimedia content is growing as an essential part of many marketing campaigns. It's a no-brainer then that using videos as part of the company's communication strategy helps reach customers. Adding subtitles to a video can greatly affect its impact. Subtitles are used to translate speech on a video, and they're generally intended for people who don't understand the language of the video. Therefore, all speech is translated into another language.

1.1 Definition of Subtitling Translation

Subtitles and closed captions look the same, but they're actually quite different. Subtitles are divided into intralingual subtitles and interlingual subtitles. The original subtitles were intra-language subtitles, which were intended to help deaf people watch television programs. Interlingual subtitles plays the role to are translate the original text into the target language and avoid the loss of original sound. [1]

What film and television translation are facing is not a single text, but a multi-symbol text fused by special ideographic symbols such as images, pictures, sounds,

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H. Li and Z. Nie (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2023 2nd International Conference on Sport Science, Education and Social Development (SSES2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 781, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-122-7_11

and colors. Cultural image can be referred as an important cultural symbol, which represents the profound meaning of the specific culture. Sometimes it also has rich meaning and profound associations. As long as people mention the imagery, they immediately understand each other and it is easy to achieve ideological communication. And movies often convey information through cultural images on the screen, such as special buildings, landmarks of major historical and political events, etc. will convey all kinds of information. [2] And these differences between different national languages and cultures make subtitle translation more difficult, because subtitle translation is different from text translation, and there is not a lot of time and space to allow translators to explain many cultural phenomena to the audience. In addition, the facial expressions and gestures of the characters in the film dialogue are also full of non-verbal information. At this time, the translator must act as both a bilingual intermediary and a cultural intermediary, understand these meanings, and fully convey the information.

Nedergaard-Larson holds the view that subtitle translation is the process of language conversion from spoken language to written language, Gottlieb calls subtitle translation a "diagonal translation." Therefore, "subtitle translation theoretically contains three inseparable basic elements: the transfer, the simplification and the conversion. These characteristics determine that subtitle translation has similarities and differences with ordinary text translation. Subtitle translation has obvious difference from text translation, compared with general text translation, subtitle translation is more limited. Formal restrictions mainly refer to time and space limitations in subtitle translation. Subtitle translation is time-limited, which mainly means that the subtitle translation must be synchronized with the person's dialogue, actions, and pictures. In addition, due to the different understanding of the audience, the time required to view subtitles varies. Generally, a single line of subtitles is composed of limited words, because of the limitation of the space in the screen.

1.2 Previous Studies on Speech Subtitling Translation

Van Hoecke (2022) explores the multitask models for neural translation of speech, augmenting them in order to reflect two intuitive notions. The study introduces a model where the second task decoder receives information from the decoder of the first task, since higher-level intermediate representations should provide useful information. Second, apply regularization that encourages transitivity and invertibility. Duman (2022) shows that the application of these notions on jointly trained models improves performance on the tasks of low-resource speech transcription and translation. It also leads to better performance when using attention information for word discovery over unsegmented input. The study achieves large improvements relative to several baselines.

Some scholars focuses on the functions of and in English and its translations into Czech, French, Hungarian and Lithuanian, in a selection of TED Talks. At the level of characteristic words, analyze literal translation and free translation; at the sentence level such as non-subjective, meaning repeated sentences, multi-verb sentences, and long modifier sentences, analyze provincial translation, translation, back-translation,

co-translation, disassembly, and supplementary translation. Cao (2022) explores Subtitle Translation of American Sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* From the Perspective of Eco-Translatology. This study points out some characteristics of the English and Chinese languages will be compared.

2 The Principles and Translation Strategies of Skopos theory

2.1 Introduction of Skopos theory

Throughout the history of translation, people have continually thought about and explored many issues that have arisen in translation, and have formed different translation theories and research schools. In the 1960s and 1970s, translation studies have been greatly improved in many aspects because of the challenge from novel theories. Among these new theories, Skopos theory is an outstanding new theory, which brings new blood to the field of translation study. The school who proposed this theory firstly is Han Vermeer. This new theory emphasizes on the purpose of the translation activity, that means the purpose of the translation decides the translating behavior. This new theory can solve many problems and difficulties traditional translation studies, and open a new era for translation study. [3]

It can be seen that Skopos theory plays a role as the core of functionalist translation theory. In 1971, Katharina Reiss proposed new ideas concerning translation. On the one hand, she agrees with the principles of equivalence theory, the qualified translation should be equal with the original text in form and content. At the same time, this scholar found that there are some difficulties cannot be overcome in translation, the equivalence cannot be achieved, no matter how the translator makes efforts. In this situation, the translator should consider about the main target of translation and choose the appropriate translating way according to this target. [4] And then, with the guidance of this opinion, Hans Vermeer has escaped the shackles of primitive-centered equivalence and founded the foundational theory of functionalism: Skopos theory of translation.

2.2 Principle of Skopos theory

Skopos theory of translation holds that all translation processes should follow three principles. First of all, the purpose decides the process of translation. Translation is given an act with a purpose or function, and a responsible translator should be actively responsible for his translation. [5] From this perspective, translation acts serve the purpose, and the purpose becomes not only the standard of translation, but also the driving force of translation. [6] Also, the translation must conform to the intra-textual coherence standard, that is, the translation is readable and acceptable, enabling the recipient to understand and make sense in the culture of the target language and the communicative context in which it is used.

In addition, the translation must be faithful. There should be inter-textual coherence between the original text and the translated text. This is equivalent to what other translation theories call faithfulness to the original text, but the degree and form of

faithfulness to the original text depends on the purpose of the translation and the translator's understanding of the original text. [7]

2.3 Transaltion Strategies of Skopos theory

Vermeer also proposed that translation activities are cross-lingual and cross-cultural human behavior activities, and human activities with strong purpose. When translating, according to the requirements of the client or client, the translator performs selective translation from the multi-source information provided by the original work in accordance with the purpose of the translation and the special circumstances of the target reader. [7]Vermeer also focus on the influence of the environment, that means the background of the language. In order to achieve exchange, respect culture difference is necessary. Cultural differences increase difficulties for translators. The failure of translation sometimes results from the lack of knowledge about culture background. When people communicate with others from different countries, sometimes they will encounter some misunderstanding, because they have different knowledge of specific items, which is cultural difference. Respecting cultural difference is necessary. Some translators lack the knowledge of cultural differences and result in misunderstanding in translation. Only if the translation knows about the culture of the original and target language, the purpose of the translation can be achieved.

Skopos theory holds that the recipient of the translation activity decides the purpose of the translation, because he or she needs the translation. Therefore, the translator must take the needs of the recipient of the translation into account. Translation requires faithfulness, that means being faithful to the original text. Idealistic translation has a high requirement for accuracy, the accurate meaning of every word should be considered. The translator needs to have a high standard for work, process standardization is crucial, and only on this basis can perfect translation quality be achieved.

3 Analysis of Subtitling Translation in TED Talks

This study takes the speech of Sheryl Sandberg in TED Talk, ‘Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders’ as the example to analyze the application of Skopos theory to subtitling translation. Sheryl Sandberg was Formerly the director of the Clinton Administration’s Office of the Treasury Secretary and the vice president of Google’s global online sales and operations unit. The current Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, she was also the first female member to join Facebook's board of directors. At the same time, she is one of the top 50 most powerful business women elites on the Forbes list, a feminist, who is also the cover figure of Time Magazine in 2013.

3.1 Deletion

Skopos theory proposed that the initiator of the translation activity decides the purpose of the translation activity, because he or she needs the translation. Skopos theory holds that the initiator of the translation process determines the communicative purpose of the

translation. Due to the different characteristic of English and Chinese languages, if the original text directly translated, the sentence maybe long, and disagree with the language habits of Chinese, therefore, deletion is necessary.

Example 1: So, for any of us in this room today. Let's start out by admitting we're lucky.

Translation: 今天在座的各位, 我们先承认我们是幸运的。

From the translation above, it can be clearly found that the translation text in Chinese is very simple and clear, which meets the demand of watching experience of the audience. If the original text is translated with semantic translation method, it will be translated as: 今天我们这个房间里的任何一个人, 让我们开始承认我们很幸运。Obviously, it is not applied to talking habits of Chinese, and it is too mechanic.

Example 2: I'm the only woman to have pitched a deal in this office in a year?

Translation: 我是唯一一个来这间办公室的女性吗?

It can be seen that "pitched a deal" has been omitted, the information generated by the translator is interpreted in a coherent manner in the context of the target recipient, the audience can understand easily.

Example 3: What are the messages we tell the women that work with and for us?

Translation: 我们告诉给女同事和打工的女性的事是什么?

The translation makes the sentence simple, "women that work with and for us" has been summarized as "女同事和打工的女性". According to Skopos theory, it is required that the translation and the source text must maintain a certain relationship, consistent with each other in the main meaning, some extra words need to be omitted. But the meaning of the original English sentence has been changed.

3.2 Domestication

In the translation of film and television subtitles, people often regard the translation as the assimilation process of the original work, in the principle of faithfulness in translation teleology, loyalty is reflected in the purpose of translation. At the same time, takes advantage of domestication to makes audience understand easily is necessary.

Example 1: But all that aside. we still have a problem, and it's a real problem.

Translation: 但除上所述, 我们还有一个问题, 它是一个实际问题。

"Real" has been translated to "实际"rather than"一个真的问题". This kind of alienation is performed by the translator on the basis of the original work. When translating subtitles, we must pay attention to the core of film and television. We must correctly reflect the basic connotation and style of film and television, and correctly transfer information across cultures. Therefore, foreignization and domestication can improve artistic effects of the translation.

Example 2: The numbers have not moved since 2002. and are going in the wrong direction.

Translation: 这些数字自2002年以来没有发生变化, 并且有下降趋势。

Wrong direction means 下降, This "variation" exists objectively. The communication between language and culture provides translatability for translation, while the

differences make translation difficult and confrontational, and thus the alienation of the translated language.

Example 3: And even in the non-profit world. A world we sometimes think of as being led by more women.

Translation: 即使在非营利的行业，我们有时认为这一行业是被更多女性领导的。

World has been translated as “行业”, it is more applicable for Chinese language habits. Subtitle translation is a dynamic process, changing with the scenes, and rhythm of the speech. Therefore, the choice of subtitle translation and the processing of cultural information require On the basis of keeping the original artistic style of the film and the character style in the drama as much as possible, more consideration should be given to the audience's cognitive ability and appreciation habits, to correctly grasp the differences between language and culture, to achieve reasonable alienation and optimization, and provide the best for the audience.

3.3 Free Translation

Example 1: He reads on one book of 12 and goes to a couple of lectures, marches himself up to our room, a couple days before the exam to get him tutored.

Translation: 他读了1本，上了几节课，考试前来到我们房间，让我们辅导他。让我们辅导他。

It can be seen that the style and form of original text have been reserved.

Example 2: I feel like I didn't really draw out the main point on the Hegelian dialectic.

Translation: 我感到我真没有答对有关黑格尔辩证法的主要命题。

Example 3: Believe in yourself and negotiate for yourself.

Translation: 相信你们自己，为自身利益讨价还价。

The examples take advantage of free translation, in order to meet the demands of communication. It can be seen that the purpose of the translation activity decides the choice of the translator. The translator adjust translation according to the purpose, not only in the selection of words, but also in the translation strategy and so on. Under the premise of ensuring that the inter-purpose is achieved, the translator adjust the target language expression through these strategies.

In essence, translation is based on the absorption, processing and selection of the original text under its own cultural reference system. Translation must take into account these multiple relationships and work out a detailed and specific translation strategy to achieve the best results in the transmission of the film's information. In addition, cultural factors in film and television translation are difficult to deal with. There may be many words with specific cultural significance in the source text, which are relatively unfamiliar and difficult to understand and accept in the target language culture. Digest and selective reproduction of specific cultures, timely and effectively communicate the translation with the audience, and meet the emotional needs of the audience.

4 Conclusion

Skopos theory emphasizes on the purpose of the translation activity, the translator should consider about the main target of translation and choose the appropriate translating way according to this target. At the same time, it has also moved away from the constraints of primitive-centric equivalence and put translation into a broader category for research, broadening the horizon of translation studies. Taking advantage of deletion, domestication and free translation to makes audience understand easily is necessary. It can be seen that the purpose of the translation activity decides the choice of the translator. Skopos focuses on the study of the function of the translation, making purposeful rewrites for the translation effect, and improves translation efficiency. The study found that TED speech subtitle translation embodies the teleological translation principle in terms of omission, naturalization, and free translation. The application of the Skopos translation method in subtitle translation is of great practical significance for improving the subtitle translation of Chinese film and television and the level of cultural exchange.

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