

Exploring Multimodal Translation in English Teaching and Learning

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Abstract. This paper delves into the increasingly relevant field of multimodal translation, beginning with a foundational understanding of multimodality. It first elucidates the basic concepts integral to this study: "modality", "multimodality", and "multimodal discourse analysis". Modality, in this context, refers to the various forms and methods through which information and meaning are conveyed, such as text, audio, and visual elements. Multimodality extends this concept by emphasizing the integration and interaction of these different modes in communication. Multimodal discourse analysis is a methodological approach that examines how these modes work together to create meaning. Building on these concepts, the paper then explores the research background of multimodal translation. This area of study is gaining traction as the world becomes increasingly digital and interconnected, necessitating the translation not just of text but of various modes of communication that include visual, auditory, and textual elements. The current research situation is assessed, highlighting the advancements and prevalent methodologies in the field. This assessment reveals a dynamic and evolving area of study, one that is adapting to the challenges posed by new forms of media and communication. Furthermore, the paper outlines the key research fields within multimodal translation, identifying areas that have seen significant scholarly attention and those that remain underexplored. This overview provides a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of multimodal translation research.

Keywords: Multimodality, multimodal discourse analysis, multimodal translation, translation teaching.

1. Introduction

Translation has always been mainly based on language and text communication, which is an action of transforming one language information into another, and the process of converting a relatively unfamiliar way of expression into a relatively familiar way of expression [1-2]. However, translation is not only the translation of language. As are known to all, images can also express human emotions and spread information just like language. As a consequence, images are also one of the objects of translation. However, image and language belong to two very different modalities, so the translation between the two involves the concept of "multimodality". What's more, with the gradual digitization and internalization of modern society, single-modal translation can no longer meet people's daily needs, so "multimodal translation" has gradually come into the public's view. Images, music and words often appear in the same text at the same time, interacting with each other and generating multimodal meanings to serve people's daily communication needs.

2. What is multimodal?

In order to figure out what multimodal translation is, it is necessary to first clarify several basic concepts: modality, multimodality, multimodal discourse analysis. In current research, the concept of "modality" is still confused by many people, and this may be related to the fact that there are too many disciplines conducting multimodal research. Both social science research and artificial intelligence research are inseparable from multimodal analysis, but each discipline has a different understanding of "modality", which leads to the complexity of the concept of "modality" [3-5].

Usually, modality in linguistics refers to the channels and media of communication, including language, technology, images, colors, music and other symbol systems, or "the way human beings

interact with the external environment (e.g., human beings, machines, objects, animals, etc.) through their senses (e.g., vision, hearing, etc.). For example, two different languages, Chinese and English, can be regarded as two modalities, i.e., linguistic modalities; two different senses, e.g., vision and hearing, can also be regarded as different modalities, i.e., non-linguistic modalities; and even data sets collected in two different situations can be regarded as two modalities. Common modalities include visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory modalities.

Multimodality is simple: expressing and perceiving things from more than one modality is multimodality. Generally speaking, there are three main modalities studied in current research: Verbal, Vocal and Visual, also known as the "3Vs". In multimodal communication, each modality plays its own role independently as well as together, i.e., the modalities themselves generate meaning, and at the same time, they generate meaning through each other's intersections and interactions.

Multimodal translation is mainly a research based on multimodal discourse analysis, so if you want to study multimodal translation, you must figure out what is multimodal discourse analysis. Most researchers agree that multimodal discourse analysis is mainly based on Systemic Functional Linguistics, whose conceptual framework has five levels: culture, context, meaning, form and media:

(1) The cultural level, including ideology as the main form of existence of culture and genre or called genre structure potential as the selection potential of discourse mode.

(2) The contextual level, which includes contextual configurations consisting of the scope of discourse, the tone of expression when people speak and perform, and the modes of discourse.

(3) The meaning level, including discourse meaning and conceptual, interpersonal, and schematic meanings composed of several parts.

(4) Formal level, the different formal systems for realizing meaning, including the lexical grammatical systems of different scripts, the visual ideograms and visual grammatical systems of images, the auditory ideograms and auditory grammatical systems of language, etc., and the relationship between the grammars of each modality.

(5) The media level, which is the material form in which discourse is ultimately expressed in the material world, consists of two categories: linguistic and non-linguistic. Linguistic includes pure language and accompanying language; non-linguistic includes physical and non-physical. The physical ones include factors such as facial expressions, gestures, body posture and movements; the non-physical ones include instrumental ones such as PPTs, laboratories, web platforms, physical objects (projections), sound, simultaneous interpretation booths, and so on [6].

3. The Research Background of Multimodal Translation

Multimodal translation really began to become a translation method can be traced back to the famous Russian linguist Jakobson's 3-division of translation, who divided new types of translation from the point of view of symbolic encoding, and categorized translation into 3 types: intralingual, interlingual and inter-symbolic translation [7-8]:

(1) Interlinguistic translation: interpreting linguistic symbols in terms of other symbols within the same language, also known as restatement;

(2) Interlingual translation: interpreting linguistic symbols in some other language, also known as "true translation";

(3) Intertextual translation: interpreting linguistic symbols with symbols from non-linguistic systems, also known as "cross-category translation".

Jacobson's three-division approach to translation provides a new research angle for translation, but it still has certain limitations, ignoring the conversion between non-linguistic and linguistic symbols.

After Jacobson, Western translation studies increasingly focus on the nature and role of symbolic modality in the translation process. Based on Jacobson, Toury expands the concept of translation and considers translation as "one sign system being converted into another" and further defines inter-symbol translation as the conversion of different symbol codes between two different sign systems. Mayoral et al. consider discourse such as images, movies, music, etc. to be "constrained translations",

in which non-verbal factors are regarded as obstacles when translating, suggesting that although researchers have realized that non-verbal factors are involved in the construction of meaning as much as verbal symbols, their communicative function is still misunderstood.

This phenomenon did not change until the 1990's. Since 1990, with the continuous development of the Internet and multimedia technology, computers, TVs and movies have begun to penetrate into the daily life of every household, and the popularization of this mass media has led to a great change in the medium of translation, the research methodology, and the research perspectives, and has also made a lot of translation researchers begin to re-examine the translation research in the past, and begin to correct the outdated attitudes gradually. They have begun to correct their outdated attitudes. Many researchers no longer regard non-verbal symbols such as images and music as a scourge as they did in the past decades, but include them in the objects of translation research, and explore the translation conversion between different modes, and some people even put forward a more radical concept of translation, thinking that rewriting and adapting are also translations. These researches show that the translation academy has begun to explore how the non-verbal modality can be woven into an inter-symbolic network together with the verbal information to complete the conversion and reconstruction of meaning in different cultures from different dimensions.

4. The Practical Application of Multimodal Translation

Multimodal translation does not have an accurate definition as of now, but the author believes that multimodal translation is mainly divided into the following 3 parts:

(1) Translation of multimodal media or texts, mainly focusing on subtitle translation of movie and television works and translation of comic works;

(2) The conversion between multiple modalities in the translation process, such as the conversion between visual and auditory, and the conversion between text and image;

(3) The application of multimodal theory in English translation teaching, for example, the most common PowerPoint presentation in modern education is the practical application of multimodal translation teaching.

Next, the author will mainly discuss the practical application of multimodal translation from these three aspects respectively.

4.1. Translation within the Same Modality

Translation within the same modality can be understood literally, which refers to the mutual conversion between the same modalities, such as the translation of one image into another image, and the translation of one language modality into another language modality. This type of translation can be subdivided into two subtypes: same-culture translation and cross-culture translation. For example, the famous Austrian composer Mozart's German opera in Germany is re-translated into Austrian opera in his hometown, which belongs to intra-modal same-culture translation. The official language of Austria is German, plus Mozart himself is Austrian, and he was the first one to create opera in German in the 18th century (before that, most of the operas were created in French), so this translation is very necessary and meaningful, and this kind of translation is not only necessary for the German-speaking audience, but also meaningful for the German-speaking audience. In the same German-speaking cultural circle between different audiences to realize the communicative activities, is the modal translation of the same culture. Also, one of the most famous musicals in London's West End "The Phantom Of The Opera" translated into Chinese version of the "Phantom Of The Opera" into China belongs to the modal translation of cross-cultural translation, the translator according to the Chinese itself unique intonation characteristics, in the original lyrics and the original lines of the original based on the processing and adaptation to make the content of the work better understood by the people in their own country. The translator processes and adapts the original lyrics and lines according to the unique tonal characteristics of the Chinese language, so that most Chinese can better understand the content of the work.

4.2. Translation between Different Modalities

Translation between different modalities is also well understood, such as textual modality translation for visual modality translation such as TV and movies. There are also two types of translations between different modalities: homocultural translation and cross-cultural translation. The famous American biographer Ron Chernow's biography of Hamilton was adapted and moved to the theater as the musical Hamilton, which has been exceedingly popular in the United States since its premiere, which shows that this kind of multimodal translation between homocultures can be penetrated into the hearts of people in the field of non-linguistic symbols and be widely disseminated. Translation between cross-cultural modalities refers to the conversion of translation between different modalities and different cultures, for example, the famous French writer Victor Hugo's million-word book *Les Misérables* was translated and adapted into an English-language musical, which has been staged many times in London's West End and New York's Broadway in the U.S [6]. In fact, there are many more examples of this kind of English-French translation in stage plays and literary creation, which I won't go into details here. This kind of translation between different cultural modalities cross-cultural modalities between translation rewriting for translation research has broadened the space, the need for translators to carefully study the translation of connotation and form, and even with other areas of research such as literary criticism cross reference.

4.3. Application of Multimodal Translation in English Teaching and Learning

Multimodal translation may seem to be a very profound field, but this kind of translation has long been widely used in the teaching of English in middle and high schools. Multimodal translation requires teachers to make full use of multimedia and Internet technology in the teaching process to expand students' translation ability. For example, in secondary school English classroom translation teaching, teachers usually play videos, show pictures, use PowerPoint to interact with students and other ways of teaching, and this is exactly the application of multimodal translation in teaching. Maybe many teachers and students do not realize the application of multimodal translation, but in fact multimodal translation has been deeply penetrated into every English classroom [8].

5. Future Development Direction of Mutlimodal Translation

Multimodal translation is still in its infancy, there are still many research gaps, and the main purpose of the next research is to fill these research gaps. The current research on multimodal translation is still mainly focused on the translation of film and television works and the application in English teaching, but there is still a large number of deficiencies in the following aspects, which is exactly the research direction of the next researchers:

(1) At present, there is still no clear definition of multimodal translation in the academic world, and there is no very professional and systematic monograph for future research, so researchers need to continue to carry out systematic research, to give an accurate definition of multimodal translation, and to summarize previous research to complete the same systematic work as other translation research.

(2) Multimodal translation research is still dominated by the translation of film and television works and lacks research on the translation of other forms of nonverbal modality, so the researcher needs to continue his research on the translation of other pictorial or musical modalities to make this research more systematic and diversified.

(3) As we all know, corpus is one of the indispensable tools to study language, but nowadays multimodal translation research has not yet established a systematic corpus, so researchers should strengthen the construction of multimodal translation corpus to make multimodal translation research more specialized.

6. Conclusion

Up to now, multimodal translation is still an emerging research direction compared with other translation studies, and not too many people pay attention to it and systematize it. However, it is obvious that with the gradual popularization of new media and the gradual decline of traditional media, multimodal translation will be as widely valued as traditional translation in the near future. This requires researchers to make concerted efforts to explore the potential value of multimodal translation and let the public realize its significance, only in this way can multimodal translation be widely valued and get rapid development.

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