

A Comparative Study of Video Games Translation from the Communicative Translation Theory Perspective

-- Taking Tencent Version and TWM Version in *League of Legends* as Examples

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Abstract: With the development of the internet, video games are more and more popular. When games are introduced into China, translation plays an important role that will influence players' feelings. Therefore, various game companies place great emphasis on video game translation. This thesis aims at studying the translation of *League of Legends* in Tencent and TWM. Based on Newmark's communicative translation theory, and by adopting the method of comparative analysis and collecting the champions' titles, names and weapons, the two versions were chosen as the subject, and it is found that Tencent's translation is better. The analysis shows that translators should analyze the characteristics of champions before the translation, and then use the correct method. For further studies, the comparative analysis of these two versions can provide the theoretical basis for the translation of video game and also enable more gamers to know about the translation of video games.

Keywords: Video Game Translation; Newmark's Communicative Translation Theory; Comparative Analysis.

1. Introduction

Video games were introduced as a commercial entertainment media in the 1970s. In recent years, various foreign popular games have been introduced to different countries and have become a great pleasure in life.

The development of video games abroad is earlier than that in China, so they are advanced in video games' translation also. The early video game translation in China appeared in the single-machine game translation in 1998. Due to the lack of translation experience, most of the games were translated by college students, which leads to inconsistent translations in games and even illogical from the original texts.

This study aims to analyze the translation of *League of Legends* in Tencent version and TWM version that based on communicative theory of Newmark. Under this theory, the author can make a conclusion about which version translates better, so as to improve the understanding and the experience of players and provide the theoretical basis for the translation of video game.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Communicative Translation Theory

Peter Newmark (1916-2011) was a well-known linguist, translator and translation theorist. He put forward the theory of semantic translation and communicative translation in 1981, which is the cores of his theory. As Munday[1] noted that Newmark suggested narrowing the gap by replacing the old terms with semantic and communicative translation. Newmark[2] summarized the translation theories that communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. Therefore, communicative translation theory supports not only being faithful to the original text, but also being independent of it, which could lead to the literal translation.

At the same time, the connotation of communicative translation is of great significance to translation practice. For translators, mastering the language itself and profound cultural background knowledge is the necessary condition for correct language conversion. However, if there is a conflict between the two translation forms (if semantic translation will lead to "abnormal" TT, or the equivalent effect cannot be obtained in the target language), then communicative translation should be the first choice.

What's more, communicative translation emphasizes on combining target language's cultural background. Therefore, when a translator in practice, he must have cultural background of these two languages so that he can translate correctly and express the linguistic character of that culture. However, target readers don't want too many foreign elements to be transplanted into their own culture, which will affect the reading experience, it can be interpreted that communicative translation is more suitable to translate the foreign culture. As communicative translation focuses on the word 'communicative', the significant feature of communicative translation is to create a better reading experience for target language readers and make the communicative translation between source language and target language possible.

In addition, Newmark distinguished free translation and adaptation translation. Free translation suggest translator emphasize the original meaning of the source language, and make the translated texts more natural even it just like paraphrases. As an important procedure, adaptation obtains translators' attention on target language readers' cultural connotation. As the freest translation form, it is used in the theater and advertisement, with the target translation oriented, the target translation won't have too much trouble in understanding the translated texts. Besides, Newmark[2] divided texts into following three types according to their different functions: informative, expressive and appealing. For informative texts, the translator needs to take the author as the core. Translators should not only accurately reproduce the contextual meaning of the original text, but also be faithful

to the author's writing style. But the key of expressive text is authenticity, which means that although the content of the original text is displayed, it does not follow the text. The infectious text pays more attention to readers and emphasizes readability, so that readers can easily understand the text. Communicative translation theory is often adopted in these text types, such as news reports, textbooks, public notices, and many other non-literature works. So Newmark's communicative translation theory is suitable to guide the translation of video games.

2.2. Criteria of Communicative Translation

Different from putting original readers in the first place, a basic principle that translators must keep in mind in communicative translation is that they must always consider the target language readers. And there are three criteria in communicative translation, which includes target-language-oriented, aesthetics and faithfulness.

Firstly, the translation should be target-language-oriented. As the source of communicative translation, culture is important and unique to every language. Besides, the core of communicative translation is to produce effect of the target readers as close as the original readers. Therefore, communicative translation should be target-language-oriented.

Secondly, the translated text should be aesthetic and make people have aesthetic experience. For most people, they all have the idea of pursuing beauty and aesthetics. If a translation work could bring people some aesthetic experience, it will attract more attention, so as to achieve the purpose of communication.

Lastly, the translation should be consistent with the original content. Based on the communicative translation theory, translators can make appropriate adjustments to the original text in order to make the target readers understand the translation better. The reason why translators should pay more attention to the original text is that one of the translation purposes is to transfer information. And the original text is the source of information, as well as the basis of translation. Therefore, translators should respect the original text and be faithful to the original text.

3. Comparative Analysis of Translation in League of Legends from the Communicative Translation Theory Perspective

3.1. Comparative Analysis of Translation on Champions' Titles

There are 166 champions in League of Legends (January, 22, 2024 Version 14.1), and they all have their own titles, names and characteristics.

Table 1. Two versions of champion's title

Riot	Tencent	TWM
The Hallowed Seamstress	灵罗娃娃	圣启织偶

The literal meaning of The Hallowed Seamstress is “神圣的女裁缝”, but Tencent translated it with her background story. She was a doll made by a tailor before a tragedy separated them. The doll sank into the sea but did not

give up looking for her master. She believed that the power of love would help her find her master. “灵罗” has a similar pronunciation with “绫罗”, and “灵” means clever and dexterous while “罗” is a type of silk fabric, it expresses her identity as a doll. And “灵罗” replaces “绫罗” can show us The Hallowed Seamstress's background story, mission and her characteristics. But in contrast with TWM, it retains the character “圣” and is true to the American Server, and “织偶” expresses her identity in a polite way. Compared with TWM, as a vocative text, the translator of Tencent takes the players as his core, gets rid of the original text, and explains her names in other words whereas TWM translates it directly.

According to Peter Newmark's communicative translation theory, we should try to produce the same effect on the target readers as is produced by the original on the source language readers. That is to say, the translated version should be target-language-oriented. Therefore, Tencent makes the game player enjoys a deeper understand by using the rhetorical method of reduplications, and arouses the player's interest.

Table 2. Two versions of champion's title

Riot	Tencent	TWM
The Rogue Sentinel	影哨	侠盗哨兵

The meaning of rogue is to describe a person who behaves badly, but in a harmless way. Actually, he is upstanding and highly skilled in the art of stealth combat, able to evade the eyes of his enemies and reappear when they least expect him. With a keen sense of justice and a legendary death-reversing weapon, he rights the wrongs of Runeterra's many scoundrels while living by his own moral code: “Don't be an ass.” Therefore, in my opinion, the characteristic “影” obtains his skills, whereas the TWM uses “侠盗” explains the meaning of rogue but not really true to him. “影” means someone's actions are silent and invisible, and no one can detect him. And “盗” means take something from a person without permission and without intending to return or pay for it. It is not a good word in Chinese meanings, because he doesn't steal anything. So the translation of TWM is true to the origin name but not to his personality, the Tencent version with free translation is better.

3.2. Comparative Analysis of Translation on Champions' Names

The name of the champion has a certain influence on the players' first impression. It can help the player choose a champion in a short time and make player more interested in it because of the characteristics of the name.

Table 3. Two versions of champion's name

Riot	Tencent	TWM
Kindred	千珏	镜爪



Fig 1. The oracle of “羊”

The translation of Kindred is totally free translation. First things first, kindred mean one's relatives or family, and this champion is a combination of wolf soul and lamb soul, so it can explain why he names kindred. Secondly, the oracle of “羊” is similar with the “千”(see picture1), the translator translates it with the Chinese character that helps players feel the combination with Chinese culture. “珏” in dictionary means two pieces of jade joined together, which can also indicate the wolf and lamb. This character explains kindred's background perfectly, besides, these two characters are translated in a transliteration way, and also elucidates the story of wolf soul and lamb soul.

According to Peter Newmark's communicative translation theory, aesthetic principle tells readers that any beautiful thing is the dialectical unification of form beauty and content beauty. In other words, players can feel the beauty in the translation of champion's name. Therefore, in this way, Tencent translates better than TWM, not only in free translation, but also in using principles of aesthetic.

Table 4. Two versions of champions' names

Riot	Tencent	TWM
Xayah	霞	刹雅
Rakan	洛	锐空

Note: These two examples share the same method, so they are analyzed together.

They are soul mates in the game, protecting their tribe while keeping a low profile. Every move of Rakan is to cooperate with Xayah completely. The name Xayah comes from an old Mongolian name, Zaya, meaning “victorious”. Rakan originates from a Malay noun “Rakan”, meaning “friend or relative” [3]. Chinese Server uses the method of transcreation that combines this soul mate with a poem “落霞与孤鹜齐飞，秋水共长天一色。”[4]. It means “The autumn river shares a scenic hue with the vast sky. The evening glow parallels with a lonely duck to fly.” They have the same pronunciation, with the cooperation of Rakan and Xayah, and it creates every action and also makes players connect them with the scene of autumn. The difference is that TWM translates them literally that can not make the same effect as the Chinese Server in pronunciation. The players can not associate the perfect cooperation of this soul mate, either.

3.3. Comparative Analysis of Translation on Champion's Weapons

Table 5. Two versions of champion's weapons

Riot	Tencent	TWM
Calibum (Rifle)	通碧 (步枪)	月影步枪 (步枪)
Severum (Scythe Pistol)	断魄 (短镰枪)	月镰枪刀 (镰刀短枪)
Gravitum (Cannon)	坠明 (加农炮)	月殒重炮 (加农重炮)
Infernum (Flamethrower)	萤焰 (喷火器)	炽夜月焰 (火焰喷射器)
Crescendum (Chakram)	折镜 (飞轮刃)	月曲终章 (环型飞刃)

The primary function of language is to pass information. The information here not only refers to the form of information, but also the tone and style of the original text. So translation is very important. In the game, according to the story of Aphelios, his all weapons are about moon. Therefore, it is acceptable that translation of weapons needs to be slim and sounds easy to hide, which is corresponding to the weapons' appearances. As a region of the *League of Legends*, Mount Targon is designed from the ancient Greek, that is to say, Calibum, Severum, Gravitum, Infernum and Crescendum are all form Latin, which equal the words Caliber, Sever, Gravity, Inferno and Crescent.

First of all, the translation of Tencent makes the weapons' names simpler that only enjoy two characteristics. Caliber (口径) means diameter of a tube or gun barrel, and this rifle is long and light, “通碧” means “通体幽碧”, which describes the rifle's appearance. In addition, from the Chinese ancient poem “白景归西山，碧华上迢迢。” [5]. Tencent uses “碧” to represent the moon while the TWM translates it directly with the Chinese characteristics “月”. Secondly, Sever means cut off, so “断” can be used to describe the features of scythe pistol. Moreover, “魄” means moon, it can also be explained to represent the light of moon, and “桂魄”、“冰魄” are the words to describe the moon in ancient China. However, TWM version translates the names of Severum in a direct way, which is lack of beauty of the Lunari. Thirdly, Gravity is the force of attraction between all masses in the universe, “坠” means something goes down, and “明” is another explanation of moon which is from the poem “蟾蜍蚀圆影，大明夜已残。” [6]. And compared with the TWM version, it is translated with the characteristics “殒” and it also means gravity; but its translation of moon still use one word, and adds the meaning of cannon, which can explain the effect of weapon to players. And about its fourth weapon, Tencent version and TWM version all translate Inferno with one word “焰” to include the effect of flamethrower, but Tencent version adds “萤” to express the moon light. Besides, weapons of the Lunari are all made of fluorescent magic stone. Therefore, contrary to the Lunari, the direct meaning of inferno cannot express the elegance of the Lunari totally. TWM version makes the translation in a simple way for players to understand, because “炽” also means hot and fire. The two versions' translators have considered the difference of inferno and the Lunari. But Tencent version is better than TWM version. Lastly, Crescent means a curved shape that is wide in the middle and pointed at each end, so the word “折” can express the curved shape of moon. Moreover, this weapon can come back to him after he throws it, and “折” also represents the effect of this weapon. In addition, “镜” in ancient time in China means the moon, such as “飞镜”、“宝镜”、“玉镜”, etc. So, “折镜” can express the meaning of crescent in an euphemistic way, whereas TWM version enjoys another method. “终章” is the final of music, it also means the final of this weapon. To sum up, Tencent translation conveys the exact information of the weapons and is full of cultural connotation and the feature of characteristics, but TWM province version are closer to the origin.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Major Findings

According to the above comparative analysis, the communicative translation theory is important in translation of the text of League of Legends. The translator can adopt different translation methods according to different texts on the basis of communicative translation theory. For the localization, Tencent pays more attention to it when in translation. For example, translator uses metaphors and cites allusions when translates the champions' names, and the skills' translation often translated into four-character that makes it creative and more literary. Moreover, two or three types of communicative method can be used in one text. Such as the expression function requires translator to use the method of literal translation whereas the vocative or aesthetic function requires translator to use the method of liberal translation or adaptation. That is to say, Tencent enjoys better translation version. By using the allusion and the common point of the culture of China and western countries to translate the champion's titles and names, it expresses the ingenious mind of the translator, at the same time, it also shows the translator's language organization ability and rich knowledge of video games.

4.2. Limitations of The Preset Study

Although the author has analyzed and compares the

champions' titles, names and skills, due to the limitation, there are plenty of contents of League of Legends, which includes weapons, equipment, background information and lines. And because of the limitation of the network, the titles, names and skills are all from the official websites, so the existence of oversights is common to the author. In addition, due to the limitation of the knowledge of the author, the examples may not be analyzed completely. The development of video games in recent years, video game translation will be involved by more people, and hope that the research of video game translation will be improved and researchers will find more valuable references.

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