Analysis of Naturalization and Alienation in Subtitle Translation of *Modern Family*

Xinyue Qiu

School of Southwest, Petroleum University, Chengdu, China

Abstract: With the exchange of world cultures, cultural industries between different countries have begun to spread widely. Foreigners discuss Chinese costume dramas enthusiastically, and Chinese people also like to watch foreign sitcoms. As the number of people watching American TV dramas is increasing year by year, how to do subtitle translation well has become the focus of translation scholars. Based on the theory of domestication and foreignization put forward by the famous American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti, this paper analyzes the subtitle translation in the classic American TV series Modern Family, and discusses how to promote the best communication between different cultures in subtitle translation.

Keywords: Subtitle translation, Modern Family, Naturalization, Alienation.

1. Introduction

As an important carrier of cultural exchanges among various countries, TV drama plays a very important role in promoting national exchanges and spreading national characteristics. Chinese costume TV dramas are increasingly viewed on the Internet, while the audience for TV dramas in British and American countries is also expanding. Although Chinese children start to receive English education from an early age, most people still cannot realize the freedom of English listening. How to understand the plot and further understand the society and culture of British and American countries need to rely on a strong film and TV drama translation subtitle group, and subtitle translation is particularly important. Subtitles refer to the English-Chinese translations appearing below the screen. Excellent subtitles can not only better convey the social culture that the TV series wants to show, but also enhance the audience's perception. On the contrary, unqualified subtitles will bring obstacles to the audience to understand and hinder the communication between the two cultures. British and American national cultural industry is strong, for the film and television works subtitle translation already had a certain, subtitle translation research in our country is still in the stage of development, mostly on the basis of foreign existing translation research, this paper will be through the famous American translation theorist Lawrence Weinotti naturalization and alienation theory to analyze the subtitles of *Modern Family*.

2. Introduction of Modern Family

In the United States, director and producer William Asher is considered "the man who invented the sitcom." He directed more than 20 major sitcoms from the 1950s to the 1970s, including I *Love Lucy*, which received a 9.40 rating on Douban. As people's interest flourished, they are easier to watch sitcoms, which is also conducive to the spread of American sitcoms. In recent decades, *Friends*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Bankruptcy Sisters*, and *Modern Family* have all been highly rated sitcoms. Among them, the *Modern Family*, as the subject of this paper, will be briefly introduced in the following sections.

Modern Family is a fake documentary sitcom, which premiered on September 23,2009 on ABC). As a result, characters often tell their inner thoughts about specific issues or events on camera. Since its inception, it has won many audiences around the world and won many awards. It has won five Emmy Awards for Outstanding Feature Film in a Comedy Series. The sitcom focuses on the lives of Japrichet and his family, both living in suburban Los Angeles. From its first broadcast on television, it has been updated to its eleventh season and closed in April 2020, reflecting its popularity. About 24 episodes per season, each lasting about 23 minutes. *Modern Family* revolves around three different types of families: an old husband and young wife family, a gay family and a traditional family, where Jay Preat and his children, daughter Claire Dunphy and son Mitchell Preat interact.

The Pritchett-Delgado family consists of four people so far. Jay Pritchett is the owner of a closet company, the head of the family, and the wealthiest. Jay has a dry, sarcastic sense of humor. But at the same time, he is realistic, kind, and understanding. He is divorced and remarried to Gloria, who is about 30 years younger than him and has a 14-year-old son, Manny, with his ex-husband. Gloria is a very beautiful young sexy woman from a small village in Colombia. She speaks with a strong Colombian accent that usually causes a series of laughs, but she is a very loving wife and mother. Manny, on the other hand, is outgoing and intelligent, always showing a maturity beyond his years and displaying "adult behavior," such as talking to Claire about her marriage and children. In addition, he is also romantic and passionate.

The Dunphy family consists of five members: husband and wife, Phil, a real estate agent, and Claire, a homemaker; two daughters, Hayley and Alex; and a son, Luke. Phil remains young at heart and considers himself "a cool dad". He always tries to be close to his children, and he is fearful of his wife, but aggressive and gentle in his demeanor. Claire is undoubtedly a professional housewife and a responsible mother, a crazy, unconventional girl who has made many mistakes over the years and is afraid that her children will make the same mistakes, especially her eldest daughter Hayley, who is often exhausted by the stresses of the family and who tries to be strict with her children at all times, which is not always the case. Her husband, Phil, is often dumbfounded by her odd behavior.

The Tucker-Pritchard family consists of three gay and

lesbian members. Mitchell Pridgett is a gentle and sensitive man, a capable lawyer, and an overprotective and cautious father. Cameron Tucker, Mitchell's partner of eight years, has a very rich life experience, is open and romantic, but this always makes Mitchell uncomfortable. He is also a very loving father to Lily. Lily is Cameron's adopted Vietnamese daughter.

These three different families represent the main form of family in American society. Although each character is not so perfect and has his or her own flaws, together they are a happy and harmonious family, composing a warm yet conflicting family story that has garnered a large audience worldwide. The sitcom was chosen not only because of its lively performances and some great verbal humor, but also because of the love for the meaning of life expressed in the show. Through this sitcom, viewers can see the love and respect between family and friends, as well as the Western parent-child relationship, and an optimistic and positive outlook on life.

3. Naturalization and Alienation in Subtitle Translation of Modern Family

Modern Family is broadcasted in China, then its translation should consider the target language audience, i.e. Chinese audience. In this case, it is bound to affect the translator's exploration process of subtitling, and the strategies of naturalization and alienation have been a hot research topic in the field of translation. Naturalization and alienation are two terms proposed by Lawrence Venuti. He defines naturalization as to localize the source language and to take the target language or the readers of the translated text as the destination to adopt the expressions that the target speakers are accustomed to in order to convey the content of the original text. And alienation is the opposite of naturalization, which seeks to maintain the exotic color of the original text so as not to lose the exotic flavor of the original culture and to enable the reader to learn more about the exotic culture from the translation. According to Newmark, naturalization is one of the most natural methods of translation, which transforms the culture in the original language into the culture in the target language by rewriting the text (2001:96). He also points out that comedies and farces are better translated using naturalization because the humor may contain cultural elements. By observing and summarizing the subtitle translation of Modern Family, the author believes that the combination of naturalization and alienation is a better translation method, and summarizes the translation strategies with examples as follows.

3.1. 3.1 Embodiment of naturalization strategies

On the basis of the above, audiences come to expect cultural products. In most cases, the audience tends to prefer to accept the familiar. And the naturalization strategy is precisely to achieve this purpose. In the process of translating the subtitles of Modern Family, translators should take into account the direct expectation of the audience and use naturalization as a main strategy. In the following, the author will analyze the translation techniques of subtitles in Modern Family and the use of Chinese cultural and linguistic factors.

3.1.1. Application of Chinese idioms

Chinese culture is extensive and profound, and the idioms in Chinese also have rich cultural and historical connotations. Idigraphs are usually short in length, but rich in meaning. Sitcoms in the lines did not explain is the source language culture proverbs, but in translation, if there are some idioms in the subtitles and the meaning of the same, that in this case, translate these lines into Chinese idioms, can close the distance between the audience, but also can enhance the discourse of humor, more ground.

Example 1:
Clair: How's the tutoring going?
Alex: Are you familiar with the term, "throwing good things after bad"?
Claire: Fǔ dǎo dé zěn mē yàng le?
Alex: Nǐ tīng shuō guò zhè jù huà mā, "péi lē fū rén yòu zhé bīng" ?
Alex:Have you ever heard the saying, "It pays to lose" ?
Hayley is always poor in her studies, while Alex is doing well in school. Claire asked a boy, Dave, to tutor Hayley in her homework. In fact, Hayley didn't focus on her academics. Instead, she fell in love with the tutor. Therefore, when Claire asks about Hayley's tutor, Alex makes fun of Hayley by saying "throwing good things after bad", implying that her mom is wasting money. The same ironic meaning as the Chinese idiom "péi lē fū rén yòu zhé bīng" is familiar to Chinese audiences.

Example 2:
Cam: Get used to that jealousy, Lily. ordinary people just don't understand us.
Cameron: Lìli，yào xí guàn bèi jì dù， "yān què ān zhī hóng hú zhī zhì".
Cameron wants to raise Lily to stardom, a childhood dream of his, but Mitchell is against it. He insisted that a child should lead a happy and simple life. But Cameron, always sensitive, misunderstood that Mitchell was jealous of his talent. "The people just don't understand us" could be translated as "ordinary people don't understand us". But such a translation is tasteless. The Chinese idiom "yān què ān zhī hóng hú zhì" conveys the meaning accurately, between the lines, vividly and comprehensively expressing Cameron's pride and irony.

There are also cases where no equivalent idiom can be found in the target language. In such cases, the adaptation of Chinese idioms can play a role in bridging the distance with the target language audience in an innovative form.

Example 1:
Cam: Did you bring in the dry-cleaning from last night.
Mitchell: Are you really getting on me about the dry-cleaning. Oh, I have suits in the truck
Cam: Look at that. Yesterday's lazy causes today's crazy.
Cam: Ní dài lē zuó tiān shuō lē yào sòng qù gān xǐ dē yī fú lē ma?
Mitchell: Ní shì bú shì xiáng yòng zhè gè lái rě wǒ shēng qì. ō, duì lē ,hòu bèi xiāng lǐ yǒu yí tào xī fú.
Cam: kàn ba, lǎn rén yǒu lǎn fú.
Mitchell overhears his coworkers saying that they'll wear costumes to work on Halloween, so he wears one too, but when he realizes that plus him there are only three other people dressed like that, he's tempted to change back into his costume, but if he goes home to change, he'll be late for work. So he complains to Cameron on the phone, and Cass makes him remember that the truck still has clothes, but he thinks that Cass is making fun of him for not taking his clothes to the laundromat on time, and then he realizes that he can wear

them. The translation "A lazy man is lucky to be lazy" is adapted from the idiom "lǎn rén yǒu lǎn fú," which implies that a stupid man is sometimes lucky. Here, the adaptation expresses that it is Mitchell's laziness that helps him to solve his problems temporarily, and the Chinese audience can also understand Cameron's teasing of Mitchell.

3.1.2. The Use of Four Character Idioms

Four-character idioms are the essence of the Chinese language, and it is the combination of the wisdom of the ancient Chinese people and the long Chinese culture that gave birth to the special form of writing. Therefore, these four-character idioms contain both cultural and historical backgrounds. Chinese characters are characterized by simplicity, vividness and symmetry. The advantage of using idioms to translate subtitles in Modern Family is that on the one hand it reduces the time needed to read the subtitles, and on the other hand it can bring the sitcom closer to the target language audience.

Example 1:

Mitchell: I'm not saying anything.

Cam:You're saying everything.

Mitchell: wǒ méi bié dē yì sī.

Cam: nǐ jiù shì huà lǐ yǒu huà.

In this example, the translation of "huà lǐ yǒu huà" contains a little bit of anger. It is used here to reflect the intimacy between Mitchell and Cameron. Generally, when a woman is angry with her husband, she might speak in this way, and this term does show Cameron's sensitive and feminine image.

Example 2:

Pepper: I think someone needs a Pepper talk.

Mitchell: How is that a Pepper talk?

Pepper: You need to get angry. Play aggressive. That man's been mitch-slapping you and your entire life.

Pepper: wo jue de mou ren xu yao ting dian "Hu Yan Jiao Yu" le.

Mitchell: na zen me suan shi "Hu Yan Jiao Yu" ?

Pepper:ni dei fen nu yi dian, ye man yi dian, na nan ren ji hu shan le ni yi bei zi er guang.

"Hu Yan Jiao Yu" is a variation of the Chinese four-letter word "hu yan luan yu," which means to say something that is not based on fact. Pepper is also a spice used to add a spicy flavor to food. The Chinese word is pronounced like "hu jiao", and in this case, the humor comes through.

Example 3:

Phil: Well, you just gotta tell him straight up, man to man, woman to man.

Phil: na ni zhi jie gao su ta hao le, "kai cheng bu gong", kai cheng bu "mu".

The Chinese word "kai cheng bu gong" means to treat someone honestly and openly, while the Chinese word "mu" means woman, which corresponds to Claire's gender as a woman. This adaptation not only expresses the meaning, but also matches the form.

3.2. Embodiment of alienation strategy

It is easy to find through the analysis that the audience still has expectations for the creation. Besides receiving familiar elements in watching sitcoms, the target language audience also wants to broaden their horizons and learn more about different cultures and different traditions by watching these sitcoms. From this point of view, the translation strategy of dissimilation is necessary, for example, the translation of personal names and geographical names is usually used in the way of dissimilation.

3.2.1. Direct translation

Direct translation refers to the preservation of exoticism in the translated text. However, when translating a sitcom, one may encounter lines that are not very relevant to culturally relevant factors, but in fact can be easily understood by the audience without any background information. In such cases, direct translation is the most direct and easy way of translation to convey the plot to the target language audience.

Example 1:

Jay: You got two choices. You can mope your way up those stairs and soak in a pity bath or you can pick yourself up, march into that school and act like you don't even know that girl.

Manny: Thanks. If mom asks, tell her I borrowed her tub pillow.

Jay: ni xian zai you liang ge xuan ze, ni ke yi pa dao lou shang, shang xin de chen jin zai yu gang li, ye ke yi da qi jing shen, ang shou ting xiong qu xue xiao, jia zhuang bu ren shi na ge nv hai.

Manny: xie le,ru guo lao ma wen qi, jiu shuo wo jie le ta de yu gang zhen.

Manny is a mature, romantic boy. But he is still very sad when he finds out that his friend is in love with the girl he likes. He thinks both his friend and the girl betrayed him. Jay comforts him in two ways, one is to stay in pity in a girlish way; the other is to let it go in a manly way. In the audience's prediction, the odds are that the boyhood Manny will choose the second, yet unexpectedly he chooses the girly way. The contrast between the two approaches is vividly shown through direct translation.

Example 2:

Alex: Sanjay's dad's a surgeon. His mother is a professor. I can't compare with that. I'll just have to do the best I can with what I was given.

Phil: Good for you.

Clair: We're proud of you, honey.

Alex: sang jie de ba ba shi wai ke yi sheng, ma ma shi jiao shou, zhe wo ke mei fa bi. Wo zhi neng gen ju wo men jia de qing kuang jin wo zui da de nu li.

Phil: hao hai zi.

Clair: wo men wei ni jiao ao, qin ai de.

The above example shows Alex's sarcasm and her parents' misunderstanding. Her words actually imply that her parents are not as smart as Sanjay's parents and that because of this fact she must do her best in her studies. Her parents, however, simply catch the implication that she will do her best in her studies, which instead reflects the fact that her parents are indeed not very smart. A direct direct translation is also easy to understand, so there is no need to put much effort into exploring other translation techniques.

3.2.2. Annotation in direct translation

Due to time and space constraints in subtitle translation, it is not appropriate to add annotations in subtitles. But annotations are a common phenomenon in movies or sitcoms. Without these annotations, it would be totally unfamiliar to the target language audience who are not familiar with the cultural background. The direct translation with annotations, on the other hand, retains the alienation that is in line with what is expected by the creators of the translated language.

Example 1:

Clair: I know, I went a little fast back there. But really, 40 is the same as 35.

Luke: You say that a lot.

Clair: wo zhi dai, gang gang shi you dian chao su le, bu guo

shuo zhen de, 40 he 35 cha bu liao tai duo.

Luke: ni lao shi zhe me shuo.

In the above example, the literal meaning is easy to understand, they're talking about speeding, and the commentary reveals the truth. Women don't want to talk about age; they desire to be young and beautiful, and so does Claire. Luke's irony, on the other hand, conveys humor to the target language audience to the right extent.

Example 2:

Phil: Ill admit. I'm turned on by powerful women. Wait a minute....

Phil: wo dei cheng ren, wo xi huan nv qiang ren, Michelle Obama, Oprah，Condoleezza Rice, Serena Williams. Man zhe....

These celebrities may be unfamiliar to the target language audience, so the annotation works. Phil says he likes: powerful women and lists a few, but all of these women are black, i.e., he is actually easily attracted to black women, but his wife Claire is white. The notes then convey this implied meaning clearly.

4. Conclusion

Starting from the translation theories of naturalization and alienation, this paper analyzes some impressive subtitle translations in the American drama Modern Family through the perspectives of idiomatic use, idiomatic use, direct translation, and direct translation with notes. The translator flexibly combines the strategies of naturalization and alienation so that the language and style in the original drama are more effectively conveyed to the target and the audience accurately, concisely and vividly through subtitle translation.

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