

Pragmatic Translation: Application of Relevance Theory in Film Dialogue Translation

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Abstract: As a type of cultural medium that transcends national boundaries, films are not only convey rich story lines and profound theme thoughts, but also shows the charm of various languages in communication. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, studies the meaning and function of language in practical use and provides crucial theoretical support and practical guidance for film dialogue translation. From the pragmatics point of view, film dialogue translation should not only pay attention to the accuracy of language, but also focus on the influence of context and culture on language comprehension. This paper aims to explore the principles and methods of film dialogue translation from the perspective of pragmatics, and to analyze how to achieve effective translation of film dialogue on the basis of maintaining the original style and emotional expression, in order to provide new ideas and methods for the practice and research of film translation.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Relevance theory; Film dialogue translation.

1. Introduction

Compared with the literary translation, film dialogues are different. The translations of film dialogues are not only focus on simple text, but a multi-symbol translation fused by special ideographic symbols such as images, pictures, sounds and colors is restricted by space and time in propagation.[1]At the same time, the translation of film dialogue has become a challenging and creative work due to the differences between languages and cultural backgrounds.

pragmatics focuses on the significance of language in practical use. As one of the core principles of pragmatics, the Relevance Principle provides us with a new perspective to understand and explain verbal communication.

2. Literature review:

As a branch of linguistics, pragmatics mainly studies the meaning and function of language in practical use. In recent years, the application of pragmatics in the field of translation has paid more and more attention, providing a new perspective and method for translation research. Pragmatics is a study of language use and comprehension, not only the process of the speaker expressing meaning in language and external context, but also the decoding and inference procedure of the speaker's utterance. As with semantics, pragmatics studies meaning, but it does not study the meaning of abstract language system itself, but the meaning and the process of understanding and communication by communicators in a specific communication situation. [2]

In his essay Pragmatics, Hu Zhuanglin (1980) expounds basic concepts and research scope of pragmatics. In his view, pragmatics is a theory of the relationship between symbols and symbols users, and plays an crucial role linguistics. He emphasized the connection between pragmatics and semiotics, which provided a theoretical basis for pragmatics. This theory also plays an crucial role in translation research, reminding translators to pay attention to the relationship between symbols and users to ensure the accuracy and naturality of the translation. [3]

In a new review of the work of Verschueren, He Ziran and

Yu Guodong (1999) introduced the pragmatic compliance theory of Jef Verschueren. They think that language use is the process of language choice, and the reason one can choose language lies in the characteristics of language itself, that's variability, negotiation and compliance. This theory provides a new framework for pragmatics and a new way of thinking for translation research. In the translation process, translators needed to adapt dynamically according to the context and structural object to produce the translation in the target context. This theory has crucial guiding significance for translation practice. [4]

In their article Pragmatic Translation: Application of Pragmatics Theory in Translation, Zhang Xinhong and He Ziran (2001), the paper explores the theoretical output and inspiration of pragmatic theory to translation studies. According to the relevance theory of cognitive pragmatics, they proposed that translation is a dual communication process involving the interaction between the author of the original text and the reader of the translated text. This view emphasizes the dynamic and interactive nature and provides a new perspective for translation research. At the same time, they also apply the research results of pragmatics in the fields of regulative meaning, meaning, politeness and deictic to solve the problems of culture and pragmatics in translation practice, and provide practical guidance for translation practice.

In conclusion, the application of pragmatics in translation is of great significance. It not only provides new perspectives and methods for translation research, but also provides practical guidance for translation practice. Future research can further explore the application of pragmatics in different types of text translation and its effect evaluation to promote the further development of translation research.

3. Relevance theory and Characteristics of Film Dialogue

3.1. Brief Introduction of Relevance theory

The manuscript should include a conclusion. In this section, summarize what was described in your paper. Future directions may also be included in this section. Authors are

strongly encouraged not to reference multiple figures or tables in the conclusion; these should be referenced in the body of the paper. Relevance theory is a cognitive pragmatics theory that arose in 1980 s. In 1986, the French linguist Daniel Sperber and the British linguist Deirdre Wilson jointly published their pragmatics book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, which put forward the crucial theory of cognitive pragmatics, Relevance Theory. Sperber and Wilson argue that the principle of relevance is one of the basic principles of human cognition, which guides us to find relevance in verbal communication in order to understand the speaker's intention better.

Few years after the theory appeared, Gutt, a German scholar and student of Sperber and Wilson, published his book *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* in 1991, which first applied relevance theory to translation.[6] With the relevance theory applied in translation researches which provides additional perspectives for the study of translation.

3.2. Key elements of the Relevance theory

The key elements of the Relevance theory include the following:

1. Context: Context is essential to understand the relevance of discourse. Context includes the physical environment, the social and cultural background of the utterance and the personal experience of the hearer. These factors together affect the understanding of the hearer.

2. Cognitive structure: The cognitive structure of listeners determines how they understand and interpret discourse. The principle of relevance emphasizes that the listener should look for relevance in discourse according to his cognitive structure to understand the speaker's intention.

3. Explicit and inference: Relevance theory believes that verbal communication is an. The speaker communicates messages through explicit behavior, while the listener understands them through inference. This process of explicit and inference embodies the application of relevance principle in oral communication.

3.3. Features of Movie Dialogue

1. Instantaneous and contextual: Movie dialogue often takes place in a specific situation, closely combined with the character's movements, expressions and background music, and presents the characteristics of instantaneous and contextual. This feature requires translators to satisfy the relevance theory in translating so as to ensure that the translation can accurately convey the emotion of the original works.

2. Colloquial and Personalization: Movie dialogue usually uses colloquial expression, and character, identity and emotion of the character will also be reflected in the dialogue. Translators need to translate properly on the basis of keeping the original colloquial and individualized and to ensure the distinct character image and the transmission of emotion.

3. Cultural and Metaphorical: Film dialogue often contains rich cultural elements and metaphors which are closely related to specific cultural background and context. Translators need to translate accurately on the basis of understanding the original culture and to ensure that the translation can accurately convey the cultural connotation and metaphor meaning of the original.

3.4. The Importance of Relevance theory Application in Film Dialogue

I. To better interpret Dialogue Intention and Understanding Process: Pragmatics Relevance Theory provides a sturdy framework for explaining intention and understanding process in film dialogue. This theory emphasizes cognitive interaction and contextual assumptions among interlocutors, which helps us understand how characters communicate and receive information in film dialogue, and how they infer and understand it according to context.

II. To discover the deep meaning of dialogue: Relevance Theory not only focuses on the literal meaning of dialogue, but also emphasizes the deep meaning and the implication of dialogue. In film dialogue, the characters may express their true intentions and emotions through metaphor, suggestion or irony. Through the analysis of the correlation theory, we can understand these inferences deeper and thus grasp the inner world of the characters and the theme of the film more comprehensively.

III. To guide the translation and interpretation of film dialogue: Relevance Theory provides crucial guidance for the translation and interpretation of film dialogue. In the translation process, the translator needs to consider the context and culture of the original so as to ensure that the translation can accurately convey the original intention and emotion. Through the analysis of relevance theory, translators can understand the meaning and cultural connotation of the original works more accurately, thus carrying out more accurate translation.

4. Application of Relevance theory in Film Dialogue Translation

Relevance theory emphasizes that in the communication process, the speaker needs to carry out inference according to the information provided by the speaker and his own cognitive environment in order to find out the relation of the speaker's intention. What the listener needs is not the greatest relevance, that is, the maximum contextual effect with the least processing effort, but the optimal correlation, achieving optimal relevance.[7] This inferential process involves the identification and understanding of the speaker's intentions.

Example 1:

A conversation between Vito Corleone and his advisor Tom Hagen discussing the family business in the film *The Godfather* 《教父》:

Vito Corleone: "Leave the gun. Take the cannoli."

Tom Hagen: "But, sir, the other families..."

Vito Corleone: "Tom, you're not in Kansas anymore. The things we do here... they have a name. You can call it business, or politics... or whatever you want. But don't ever call it fair."

Translation:

维托·柯里昂：“放下枪，拿起甜点。”

汤姆·海根：“但是，先生，其他家族……”

维托·柯里昂：
“汤姆，你不再是在堪萨斯了。我们在这里做的事情……它们有个名字。你可以称之为生意，或者政治……或者你想怎么叫都行。但永远不要称它为公平。”

Analysis:

In this dialogue, Vito Corleone conveys a complex process of inference to Tom Hagen through the succinct but meaningful instruction "Leave the gun. Take the cannoli." This is not only a suggestion for action, but also a metaphor

for the family business, power games and survival strategies.

Vito's words "Tom, you're not in Kansas anymore" emphasise the specific context in which they live - a criminal world full of power struggles and conspiracies. This context is part of the cognitive structure that Vito and Tom share, and it influences their understanding of the concept of fairness. In this context, "fairness" may not always be the applicable standard, and "business" or "politics" may be more apt descriptions.

Tom's confusion and concern suggests that he is trying to frame their behaviour within the framework of 'fairness', which reflects the difference in his cognitive structure from Vito's. Vito corrects Tom's view by stating, "But never call it fair," which is both a direct instruction to Tom and an insightful revelation into the way the family business operates as a whole.

In translating this dialogue, the translator needs to accurately convey the reasoning process between Vito and Tom, the specific context and their different cognitive structures. This translation needs to capture Vito's authority, Tom's confusion, and the dynamics of their power relationship. Through effective translation, the audience is able to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity and meaning behind this dialogue.

This dialogue not only shows the inferential process in pragmatic relevance theory, but also emphasizes the importance of context and cognitive structure in understanding and communication. The conversation between Vito and Tom was not just a simple exchange, but a profound teaching of power, strategy and survival.

Example 2:

In the Star Wars 《星战》 series, Darth Vader Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker Luke Skywalker are in a conversation in Empire Rebellion:

Darth Vader: "Luke, I am your father."

Luke Skywalker: "No! No! That's not true! That's impossible!"

Darth Vader: "Search your feelings; you know it to be true."

Translation:

达斯·维达：“卢克，我是你的父亲。”

卢克·天行者：“不！不！那不可能！那是假的！”

达斯·维达：“感受你的内心，你知道这是真的。”

Analysis:

In this classic conversation, Darth Vader reveals the shocking truth that he is Luke Skywalker's father. The message completely surprised Luke, causing him to immediately deny and show a strong emotional reaction.

From the Relevance theory perspective, Darth Vader's words "Luke, I am your father." are a clear statement intended to convey a direct message. The message, however, was a huge shock for Luke, a strong conflict with his existing perceptions. So he immediately inferred, trying to find a way to deny the message, because he could not accept the fact.

In translating this conversation, the translator needs to accurately convey Luke's shock and denial, as well as Darth Vader's steadfastness and self-confidence. This emotional contrast and conflict is at the heart of the conversation and a source of the tension that viewers can feel.

In addition, Darth Vader's response "Search your feelings; you know it to be true." further emphasized his confidence in the truth and suggested that Luke should accept it by feeling inside himself. Translation of this sentence needs to reflect Darth Vader's authority and persuasion so that the audience can understand why he believes this fact so firmly.

In conclusion, the translation of this dialogue not only involves the equivalence of words, but also needs to convey the emotional conflict and inferential process between speakers. Through effective translation, viewers can understand more deeply the relationships and dynamics of the characters in the film, as well as the internal struggles and conflicts they face.

Example 3:

In the film The Godfather 《教父》, Vito Corleone talks to someone trying to get his help at his daughter Connie's wedding:

Seeker: "Mr. Corleone, I understand you're a man of great influence. I'm here to ask for your help."

Vito Corleone: "And what is it you need from me, my son?"

Seeker: "There's a business matter that I can't resolve myself. I was hoping you might have some influence with the union."

Vito Corleone: "And why should I help you? "

Seeker: "I... I don't know. I just assumed..."

Vito Corleone: "You assumed wrong, my son. Just because I'm a powerful man doesn't mean I'm your servant. Now, tell me, what makes you think I would want to help you?"

Translation:

求助者: “柯里昂先生，我听说您是个非常有影响力的人，我来这里是想请您帮忙的。”

维托·柯里昂: “那么，我的孩子，你需要我为你做些什么呢？”

求助者: “有一件生意上的事我无法自己解决。我希望您可能在工会那边有点影响力。”

维托·柯里昂: “我为什么要帮你呢？”

求助者: “我.....我不知道。我只是以为.....”

维托·柯里昂: “你想错了，我的孩子。就因为我是个有权势的人，并不意味着我是你的仆人。现在告诉我，你凭什么认为我会想帮你呢？”

Analysis:

In this conversation, Vito Corleone demonstrated his shrewdness and prudence as a power figure through a series of questions. Instead of directly denying a request, he leads the other person to express his needs and motives through questioning. This way of asking questions is actually going through an inferential process of trying to understand the true intentions of the seeker.

In translating this dialogue, the translator needs to convey the inferential process accurately. And what is it you need from me, my son? and "And why should I help you?" is to guide the supplicant to further explain and explain. This inference process should be reflected in translation to ensure that the audience of the target language understands Vito Corleone's intentions and strategies.

In addition, Vito Corleone's response, "You assumed wrong, my son. Just because I'm a powerful man doesn't mean I'm your servant." The translation of this sentence needs to convey his confidence and authority accurately so that the audience can understand why he is so cautious and tough on a supplicant.

To sum up, the translation of this dialogue not only involves the equivalence of words, but also needs to convey the inferential process and intention between speakers accurately. Through effective translation, the audience can understand

more deeply the relationship and dynamics between the characters in the film.

Example 4:

In *Inception* 《盗梦空间》, Dom Cobb Dom Cobb and his wife Marr Mal in a dream:

Dom Cobb: "Mal, it's just a dream. You're safe. We're together."

Mal: "No, it's not just a dream. It's real!"

Dom Cobb: "No, Mal. It's just our minds. We can control it."

Mal: "No! It's happening again! I can't stop it!"

Translation:

多姆·柯布: “玛尔，这只是一个梦。你很安全，我们在一起。”

玛尔: “不，这不只是一个梦。这是真实的！”

多姆·柯布: “不，玛尔。这只是我们的思想。我们可以控制它。”

玛尔: “不！它又要发生了！我无法阻止它！”

Analysis:

During this conversation, Dom Cobb tried to comfort his wife, Mal, telling her that what they were going through was just a dream and that she was safe. However, Mal believes that this is not a simple dream, but a real situation. Her fear and despair reflected the painful experiences she had endured in her dreams in the past.

The Relevance theory is how Marr interprets and responds to Dom's words. She rejects Dom's explanation because she links the current situation to past painful experiences based on her experience and cognitive environment. Her response was "No, it's not just a dream. It's real!" which shows her inferential process: She thinks the dream reflects her deep fears and feelings of truth.

In translating this conversation, the translator needs to capture Marr's fear and despair, as well as Dom's efforts to comfort her. At the same time, the translation also needs to convey Marr's distrust and rejection of Dom's words and her true feelings about what happened in her dreams. Such translations can help viewers understand Marr's internal struggles and why she can't simply accept Dom's explanation.

In addition, the dialogue reveals another important aspect of relevance theory: the effect of cognitive environments on understanding. Marr has different interpretations and reactions to dreams due to his painful past experiences. This difference in cognitive environment leads to difficulties in communication and understanding between them.

To sum up, the translation of this dialogue needs to

accurately convey the differences of emotional conflict, inferential process and cognitive environment between characters. Through effective translation, the audience can understand the psychological state and the predicament of the characters in the film.

5. Conclusion

Relevance theory provides sturdy theoretical support for film dialogue translation. This study also emphasizes the importance of relevance theory in maintaining the emotion and effect of the original dialogue. By following the principle of relevance, the translator can ensure that the translation is consistent with the original dialogue in terms of emotional transmission, thereby enhancing the audience's resonance and understanding of the film. This emotional transmission is crucial to films, because it enhances the audience's experience of watching them, makes it more immersed in the storyline and character emotions.

In conclusion, the application of relevance theory in film dialogue translation is of great significance. It not only provides theoretical guidance for translators, but also helps them to maintain the intention, emotion and effect of the original dialogue in practice. In the future, with the continuous development and improvement of the theory of relevance, we have reason to believe that it will play a more crucial role in the film dialogue translation and even more widely.

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