Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: A Translation Analysis of Culture Load Words Through the Perspective of Post-Colonialism

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Abstract:

Post-colonial translation theory examines translation research from a brand new view. It begins to take into account the factors outside of the text that affect translation. Said's view reveals the political character of post-colonial translation. Homi K. Bhabha's third space theory has attracted wide attention due to its great view and inclusive spirit. The film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a representative success of Chinese films in the international film field. The success of the film comes from both the rich Chinese culture and the naturalized translation strategy. Through case analysis, this article finds that in the process of subtitle translation of the *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the meaning of some cultural loaded words cannot be completely and comprehensively transformed. This is related to the characteristics of subtitle translation and also to the cultural habits of the target groups of the film. The article proposes that such a translation strategy is conducive to Chinese films to find a place in the market, but we can also find a balance between retaining the culture and seizing the market.

Keywords: Film; culture; translation; post-colonialism.

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, cross-cultural communication among countries around the world has become increasingly frequent. Film is an important tool for culture transmission. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is one of the most successful Chinese martial films to enter the Western film market. This film is full of traditional Chinese cultural images. The success of the film is due to it being a new artistic product that combines Eastern artistic traditions with Western cultural ideology [1].

Previous study focuses on the adaptive transformation of Chinese subtitles to English culture. Huang Min recon the transformation is a response to multiple contextual conditions. The author explains the combination of conformity theory and the subtitle translation of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* films in terms of social habits, language habits, and cultural customs [2]. In another article, Junchen Zhang believes that the director Ang Lee uses Western narrative style to tell Chinese stories, shaping China in the eyes of a Western person, and these images are different from the real Chinese culture [3]. This article discusses the loss of the meaning of culturally loaded words in subtitles through the principle of post-colonialism. This paper follows his view and combines it with Homi K. Bhabha's third space theory to explore the translation of cultural load words from a post-colonial perspective [4].

Cultural load words refer to the words containing rich social and cultural meanings in their language, including specific words, idioms, allusions, and so on, reflecting the unique development history, social system, ecological region, and religious belief of the country or nation in which they are located [5]. As the expression mode of film, subtitle translation plays a very important role in the cultural communication between Chinese and Western countries. However, the subtitle is characterized by simplicity and fast pace. These characteristics determine that the space to display one cultural tradition is limited. Most of the audience can only understand the meaning of the film and the cultural content of the film through the subtitles. Therefore, in the limited space, the source language and the destination language must compete for the right to speak. Even if the translator and the audience are completely out of good intentions, the loss of meaning of the original language in the process of fighting for the right to speak is inevitable [6].

Therefore, this paper will focus on the compromise of market demand in subtitle translation and study the loss of the meaning of cultural load words through case analysis. At the same time, this paper will explore how to retain the cultural characteristics of the source language as far as the

market demand, so as to achieve the purpose of cultural communication.

2. Literary Review

2.1 Post-colonialism

The theory and systematization of post-colonialism is marked by the publication of Said's Orientalism. Homi K. Bhabha, Spivak and other excellent theorists have appeared successively, and their theoretical research has their own key direction. Said believes that Orientalism is a style of Western's governing the East, a symbol of power in the West, not a true discourse about the East. Post-colonialism focuses on opposing the modern Western hegemonic culture and the knowledge structure of imperialism, emphasizing the diversity of culture, focusing on marginalization, difference and confusion, and maintaining the identity of the former colonized people [7]. Homi K. Bhabha's theory of "third space" provides a new horizon for the subtitle translation of Chinese films. It abandons the binary opposition mode, attaches importance to differences, emphasizes dialogue, highlights inclusiveness, and emphasizes a harmonious view of civilization. Of course, we need to take a critical inheritance of this theory. Homi K. Bhabha believes that when the two cultures conflict, a middle zone is inevitably created. The zone is strange and fuzzy. It comes from two cultures, but it is something outside of both [4].

2.2 Post-colonial Translation

The origin of post-colonial translation studies can be traced back to the 1940s and 1950s. Anthropologists and historians such as Godfrey Lienhardt investigated Indigenous culture and realized that „to describe the thoughts of the residents of distant tribes in your own language is largely a translation." The studies of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabba, and Spivak laid the foundation for postcolonial translation studies. The term „postcolonial translation studies" was formally proposed by Douglas Robinson in 1997. Postcolonial translation studies are inspired and developed by post-colonialism. However, different researchers place different emphasis on postcolonial translation [8]. Said, he believes that the techniques of post-colonialism studies in the process of describing the East are based on the interest of the West, and it is slandering rather than describing. He identified the relationship between knowledge and politics [7]. Meanwhile, Homi Bhabba focuses on translating culture and people. He proposed that it is hard to translate completely because there are untranslatable words and words of resistance. Therefore, he proposed the "third space" theory. "third place" means an area as an intermediate region of two different cultures [9].

This region neither belongs to one culture nor to another culture. This theory has laid the foundation of post-colonialism translation. Spivak is concerned with translation itself; her research field contains Marxism, deconstruction, feminism, post-colonialism, etc. She focuses on the unique status of language [10].

Despite Said, Bhabba, and Spivak laying the foundation of post-colonial translation, other scholars have also conducted specific and systematic research on postcolonial translation like Ninanjana, Raphal, and Timozhiko [8].

2.3 Subtitle Translation

Subtitles are an indispensable part of when we watch foreign movies. The quality of subtitle translation will affect the audience's viewing experience. To sum up, Film subtitle translation has three remarkable features. First, instantaneous, when reading ordinary literature, readers can stop to think, or understand the text by reading back and forth. Each line in a movie often stays on the screen for only a few seconds and needs to be switched with the soundtrack and the screen. This requires the translator to express the words in the most concise language. Secondly, the space is limited. The length of the subtitles should adapt to the screen space to the greatest extent and should not block the screen. Finally, colloquial, film, and television subtitles contain a lot of dialogue and are the art for the public. Therefore, the translation should be easy to understand, conform to the situation, and find the corresponding appropriate expression in the language environment of the target language [11].

2.4 Culture-loaded Word Translation

In terms of translation strategies for culture-loaded words, Hervy and Higgins proposed five methods for achieving cultural transposition. These are as follows: calque, exoticism, communicative translation, culture borrowing, and cultural transplantation. Foreign scholars' research on the translation of culture-loaded words has established a theoretical framework for future research on the translation of Chinese culture-loaded words.

The study of culture-loaded word translation has undergone a long period of development in China. Using "文化负载词翻译"(culture-loaded words) as the keyword on CNKI [7].

The studies on culture-loaded word translation can be divided into three types in China; The first one is the analysis of culture-loaded word translation strategies. the second one is the analysis of using translation theories to study the culture-loaded words translation phenomena in various texts, and the third one is the summary and review of the culture-loaded words translation [8].

3. Translation Analysis

The film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* contains a lot of words that are culturally loaded. The era of the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is the climax of Chinese films to go abroad and go to the world. This film aims to explore the global market and realize the advantages and characteristics of Chinese traditional culture films. Therefore, this paper will focus on the translation of cultural load words in this film and explore the current situation of the translation of the source language in the context of post-colonialism.

3.1 Translation Analysis from a Cultural Point of View

Many Chinese cultural concepts do not have an expression in English, and because of the limitation of subtitle space, the translator reduces the meaning of cultural load words in the process of translation [11]. According to Said's point of view, post-colonial translation is a political point of view, so to serve the Western film market, the translator needs to omit some cultural concepts of the East [7].

Chinese: 有件东西 , 烦劳你替我带给贝勒爷

English: perhaps I could ask you to deliver something to Sir Te for me

Baylor Ye is a unique concept in Chinese culture. "Dorobele", formerly the title of Manchu royal aristocracy. After the founding of the Qing Dynasty, it became the title of the imperial clan.

So, the bele master in the article is born in the Manchu royal family of aristocrats. Sir Is often used in English to show respect or indicate aristocratic identity, but it is not necessarily related to the royal family.

Chinese: 九门提督府玉大人到

English: Governor Yu has arrived

九门提督 was a specific title in the Qing Dynasty. He was mainly responsible for the access control and guard of the nine gates of the capital. Western audiences could not understand this rich cultural connotation, so the translator chose to omit this meaning in the process of subtitle translation [12].

Chinese: 玉小姐就要出阁了

English:Miss Yu is soon to be married

The concept of an 出阁 in China means that a woman is about to marry. The 阁 is the name of a building. In ancient times, the first half of the life of a lady born in an aristocratic family was spent in the so-called 阁 , and 出阁 means to come to the husband's home.

3.2 Translation analysis from a communication point of view

Spivak believes that translators should pay more attention to language itself. From the post-colonial translation view, some specific cultural images will be omitted while translating; this is both because of the unique mode of combination of language and because of different customs and political systems [10].

Chinese: 告诉你 , 我是旗人。我猜错了 , 我以为你是汉人。

English: By the way, I'm a real Manchurian. I guessed wrong. I thought you were a Han.

The Manchu people had a special status in the Qing Dynasty. The children of the Eight Banners generally refer to the descendants of the Eight Banners, also known as the Bannermen. The children of the Eight Banners were the nobles. So, Jen here said that she is a Manchurian meaning that she was from an aristocratic family. Here is also a hint about Lo; she was born extraordinary, so keeping her may cause trouble. But judging from Lo's reply, he didn't care [13].

The inability to express the special status of the Manchus in the Qing Dynasty will confuse the audience about the emotions of the male and female protagonists, thinking that it is just a simple national difference.

Chinese: 就算武当肯收留她 她丈夫。。。这位当朝的翰林 恐怕也不会答应吧 :

English: Even if Wudan accepts her, her husband might object

There is no explanation of the status of the 翰林 as the official position in the ancient Chinese bureaucracy: the emperor's literary servant needed to be selected from the imperial examination to draft documents for the court. Because Yu Jiaolong's husband is an 翰林 , deeply influenced by Confucian culture, he will never agree with his fiancée to act untamed.

Obviously, the subtitle space is limited, so the academician of this identity is omitted.

Chinese: 别着急走 , 你不是外人 , 在这儿住下

English: Please do not be such a stranger. You'll stay the night as my guest

Chinese: 别 , 您别拿朋友当外人

English: Wait! I'm a friend

The range of 外人 is very wide, which can be understood as a word that is different from friends. In the context of Chinese culture, people who know but do not have in-depth contacts can also be called 外 人 . This subtitle translation is only translated into the stranger, which is inconsistent with the context of Chinese culture.

There are significant differences between China and the West in the use of social appellation. Traditional Chinese culture pays attention to modesty and comity. Ancient China, which takes Confucianism as the mainstream consciousness, attached great importance to hierarchical consciousness. The elder brother and teacher in the text are titles for respect. The West advocates individualism,

equality and self-confidence, so it calls it by its first name in order to show equality and friendship [14].

Chinese: 我这趟下山，想先去给恩师扫墓。

English: First I must visit my master's grave

Chines: 凶手就是当年毒害，我恩兄李慕白师傅的女贼。

Englishthe very killer of Li Mu Bai's own master

In order to ensure the communicative intention of the source language, these two sentences omit the translation of the grace word and adapt to the expression habit of English. It is very successful from the perspective of the adaptive transformation. However, the meaning of the cultural load words is omitted [15].

3.3 Translation Analysis from a Language Point of View

The adaptation and selection of translation in the language dimension requires „the adaptive selection transformation of language form in the process of translation", English belongs to Indo-European language system, and Chinese belongs to the expression meaning of Sino-Tibetan language system. The two are very different in sentence pattern and rhythm. For example, in the translation of four-character short sentences in Chinese, in order to meet the length of subtitles, English maintains its short character, but it is not as neat as Chinese [16].

Chinese: 揣而锐之，不可长保

English: Real sharpness comes without effort

Chinese: 刚柔相济，方得治道

English: Be strong yet supple. This is the way to rule.

Chinese expression meaning is implicit, pay attention to feeling. While English pays attention to logic. In the process of translation, the translator adds yet.

Homi K. Bhabha believes that in the process of cultural communication, there will be new areas of meaning negotiation, which is different from the original one.

Chinese: 江湖

English: Giang Hu

The translator does not use the Chinese Jiang Hu pronunciation, but the pronunciation conforms to the English pronunciation habit. At the same time, the method of transliteration did not split the meaning of 江湖 in English. This is certainly related to the limited length of the subtitles, but more because the surface meaning of the river and the lake refers to the water area, and the combination represents a martial arts circle, and there is no corresponding expression in English.

4. Summary

It can be seen from the above analysis that the phenomenon of „cultural deficiency" is inevitable in the process of exporting Chinese films.

Chinese films need to enter the Western film market, so they have to fulfill the needs of the foreign audience. The omission and loss of meaning of culture-loaded words can be seen as a marketing method. So, we cannot criticize this post-colonial translation method [2]. At least they have helped Chinese culture won more attention in the world. However, in a new era of cultural communication, especially with the broad use of the internet, it is necessary to negotiate a new way of cultural communication [17].

With the development of economic globalization, the problems in movie subtitles will gradually decrease. Countries should strengthen cultural exchanges. In order to serve the audience of the target language, the film translator will properly explain and translate some obscure words and delete some words with ethnic color. But today's learning and communication have been extended from the simple language level to thinking habits and cultural traditions. The translator needs to find similarities in the thinking process of translation. Cultural publicity should be strengthened to help the audience in the country where the destination language is located understand Chinese culture and solve the problem of omitting cultural load words [6].

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