

Chinese Translation of English Film Titles from the Perspective of Chesterman's Translation Norms

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Abstract: This paper attempts to discuss the translation principles of film titles from the perspective of Chesterman's translation norms. Based on three aspects-- audience's expectation, client's requirement and the original text, it introduces the translation principles of film titles, namely information and text, "attraction" and relevant similarity to the original name, to guide the translation practice of film titles.

Keywords: Film Title; English-Chinese Translation; Chesterman's Translation Norms; Translation Principles

1. Introduction

A good translation of film titles is vital for the film to open Chinese market and increase ticket sales. Recently, scholars have studied the translation of film title from different theories and perspectives, while translation norms have rarely been mentioned. Chesterman's translation norms provide a different perspective and comprehensive guidance for film title translation from multiple angles such as the author, the client, the translator and the audience. Therefore, based on Chesterman's translation norms, this paper analyzes the translation principles of film titles to try to make the translation of film titles "have rules to follow".

2. Problems of Film Title Translation

At present, the Chinese translation of English film titles has the following problems:

(1) Too focused on its commercial benefits to the translated name not conform with the film, causing confusion to the audience. For example, a translation of the Disney musical film *Beauty and the Beast* is "《神鬼人兽》"(Gods, ghosts, people, beasts), which is indeed very attractive, but will mislead the audience it is a horror film.

(2) Many scholars emphasize the translator should use the "creative translation" method and bring the translator's subjectivity into full play in film title translation. But the lack of corresponding norms for the use of "creative translation" method leads to too creative translated film titles that the audience cannot accept. For example, the general translation of in Chinese mainland of 3 idiots is 《三傻大闹宝莱坞》(Three Idiots Make a Scene in Bollywood). However, this film has nothing to do with "Bollywood".

The biggest reason for this problem is that translators attach too much importance to the commercial function of the film title so that magnify the function and purpose of translation infinitely, which leads to improper translation. Chesterman's translation norms require that "translators should be loyal to the original work first. They shouldn't leave the original work aside and completely make up a new one, nor should they make groundless changes to the original work to achieve their own purposes"^[3].

Taking functional effect as the only one criterion, without considering other factors (such as the original text and audience), is obviously insufficient to the colorful film titles. Chesterman's translation norms take "readers expectations" as high priority, involve the author, the commissioner, the translator, the readers and other relevant parties, emphasize the relationship between the source and target text, providing more diversified guidance for the title translation. Therefore, Chesterman's translation norms are chosen to study film titles translation.

3. Chesterman's Translation Norms

The term "norms" was first introduced into translation studies by Eastern European scholars Jiri Levy and Anton Popovic in the 1960s. Toury studied translation norms in detail, dividing them into initial norms, preliminary norms and operational norms. On the basis of Toury, Chesterman proposes his own translation norms theory and divides translation norms into expectancy norms (product norms) and professional norms (process norms):

(1) Expectancy norms or product norms: the translation should meet the reader's expectations of the translation, such as the expectations of grammar, acceptability, style.... The expectancy norm takes account of the appropriateness and acceptability of the target text from the perspective of the target reader, which is largely restricted by various translation traditions prevailing in the target language culture and similar

text types and forms, as well as by economic and ideological factors, and power relations between the same culture and different cultures^[2].

(2) Professional norms or process norms: it imposes restriction on the translation process itself and are subordinate to expectancy norms. Chesterman further subdivides professional norms into three norms:

The accountability norm: an ethical norm, mainly refers to the translator's professional ethics and personality. "The translators owe loyalty to a set of parties including the original writer, the commissioner of the translation task, the prospective readership and even the translators themselves."

The communication norm: a social norm, "it assumes that translators should optimize communication between all the parties involved, as required by the context."^[5]

The "relation" norm: a linguistic norm, "it means that an appropriate kind of ST-TT relation should be established to account for the text type, the intentions of the commissioner, the ST producer and the assumed needs of the prospective audience."^[5]

Chesterman proposed "relevant similarity" to replace the traditional "equivalence" relationship, and believe that translation task is to seek the "optimal similarity".

4. Translation Principles of Film Title

Chesterman's translation norms provide a scientific analytical framework for film title translation. The principles of film title translation can be extracted as the following three principles:

4.1 Meet the audience's information and text expectation of the translation

Audience's expectation of film title translation mainly consists of information and text expectation:

Information expectation refers to the expectation that the audience associates with the plot, genre or emotional tone of the movie through the translated title. "Film title translation should faithfully convey information related to the content of the original film. The translation having no basis in fact or completely off the point is not in line with the audience's information expectations for film title translation"^[1]. For instance, there are several different Chinese translation versions of *The Truman Show*: 《真人SHOW》, 《真人世界》, 《真人戏》和《楚门的世界》. Different translations convey different information and the audiences have different predictions on the plot of the film.

Text expectation is related to the text convention paradigm, and the audience has certain expectations on the number of words, form, pronunciation, artistic conception of the translated film title. Generally, film title is often composed by words or phrases. It's easy to understand, avoiding rarely-used words and also have pronunciation requirements, such as catchy, easy to remember... For example, *Mission: Impossible* is translated into 《碟中谍》(cadence, rhyme), *The Upside* is translated into 《触不可及》(cadence, rhyme).

4.2 Meet the requirements of the film distribution company for attracting more viewers

Generally speaking, the film distribution company is mainly responsible for making the request for the translation and the commercial value of the film is what they value most. In other words, the translation of the title should catch the eye, stimulate the audience's watching behavior, and attract as many audiences as possible without contradicting the plot of the movie. In addition, the translation of the film title must comply with laws and regulations. For example, the translation of the movie *Zootopia* 《优兽大都会》 and 《疯狂动物城》, the latter is more infectious and attractive.

4.3 Maintain a proper similarity with the original film title

"The similarity here mainly refers to the similar relationship between the translated name and the original name in terms of content, form, style, mood, effect, etc. Each translation task has different requirements for the degree of similarity."^[3] Many translated names that have been accepted by the public also have different degrees of similarity with the original name. For example, *Titanic* to 《泰坦尼克号》 is obviously more similar than *Waterloo Bridge* to 《魂断蓝桥》 in content, form and style.

5. Analysis of the Three Translations of *Gone with the Wind* Based on the Translation Principles

Based on the three film title translation principles mentioned above, the three translations of *Gone with the Wind* are evaluated. The symbol "▲" is selected to point out the "superior" translation in each dimension.

Translation versions	随风而去 (Gone with the wind)	乱世佳人 (Beauty in tumultuous times)	飘 (Drifted)
Information and text		▲	
Attraction		▲	
Similarity with the original text	▲		

Shanghai Cinema firstly translated the film title as "随风而去", but they soon give up the translation. The translation is with highest similarity of the original name *Gone with the Wind* (content, form), while it fails to achieve the artistic conception and can't evoke much plot of the work.

The translator of “乱世佳人” is unknown. Shanghai Cinema adopts this name and it is widely accepted by audience. “乱世佳人” clearly points out the main background and protagonist of the story. The use of contrastive rhetoric in “乱世” and “佳人” places two completely opposite scenes together, creating a dramatic effect, which helps film propaganda.

“飘” was translated by Fu Donghua (1940). “飘” is of much connotation in Chinese culture, which is used a lot in poetry, for example “山河破碎风飘絮，身世浮沉雨打萍”，“飘飘何所似，天地一沙鸥...” It echoes the situation and historical background of the female protagonist Scarlett in the work. But compared with “乱世佳人”，the word “飘” can only express limit information of the plot and one word text is not common in film title. Besides, “飘” is a little bit difficult for the general public to understand which fails to meet the needs of attracting more viewer. Therefore, “乱世佳人” used a lot in film field.

6. Conclusion

In a word, film title translation should not just simply focus on its commercial function so as to contradict the plot of the film. The translator should stand on the audience’s shoes, considering the audience’s information and text expectations (content, form, pronunciation, artistic conception...) of the film title. At the same time, the commercial publicity function should be emphasized. In addition, the translation and the original text (content, form, style or effect...) should maintain a proper similarity. Translators should flexibly grasp the degree of similarity according to the actual situation, avoiding over “creative” translation.

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