

On the Translation Strategies of English Film Title from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract—This paper, based on the Skopos theory, discusses the translation of film title from English to Chinese. Meanwhile, according to the characteristics of film title, the writer proposes some translation strategies: such as Literal Translation, Transliteration, Free Translation etc.

Index Terms—Skopos theory, film title, translation strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

Film, as a form of entertainment, plays a more and more important role in Chinese market. English film not only enrich the people's life, broaden their insights and also bridge the gap of culture and friendship. Knowing of film starts from the title of film. A good film title can arouse the readers' interest to see a movie. So the translation of film title is of importance.

II. SKOPOS THEORY

Skopos is a Greek word for "purpose", and Skopos theory is an approach to translation, which was developed by Han J. Vermeer in Germany in the late 1970s. According to Skopostheorie, "one form of behavior is nevertheless held to be more appropriate than the other in order to attain the intended goal or purpose." (Nord, 2001:27) The essence of the theory is that it proposes "the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose of the overall translational action." (Nord, 2001:27)

Skopos theory includes three principal rules: namely, the Skopos rule, the coherence rule (intratextual coherence) and fidelity rule (intertextual coherence). On the basis of Skopostheorie by Hans J. Vermeer, Nord summarized other academic thought and Criticism to the functionalist translation theory. She put forward the loyalty rule, which is the supplement to Skopos theory. The loyalty rule repaired the disadvantages and limitation of the Skopos rule, eliminate the translation at random and avoid the tendency which thinks translation is just target text writing.

III. TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH FILM TITLE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY

According to the characteristics of film, we can divide into four skopos(purpose). Each skopos has its own translation strategies. The following is the details:

A. Informative Skopos

It's universally acknowledged that a title is supposed to contain the main or central idea of the film. After the readers read it, they should know some information about the film, such as type (detective story or Dracula movie), plot (about a person, a thing or a disaster) etc.. This information is definitely the skopos of the audiences. In order to satisfy the requirement, the translators must transfer this information as soon as possible. To achieve this goal, translators always adopt Literal Translation or Transliteration. This kind of translation can not only retain the structure of the original, but convey the content as much as possible.

Literal translation, the most common way of translation, refers to the linguistic structure of the source text is followed, but is normalized according to the rules of the target language (David Crystal, 1997). This method proves to be very simple, feasible and effective when the name reflects almost exactly the original content of the movie. Such names can be directly translated into Chinese without much speculation. Transliteration also belongs to this kind of translation. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary, "transliteration" means "to write words or letters in or as the letters of a different alphabet." (Extended Fourth Edition, 1997: 1621). Sometimes the original title is names of people, places or onomatopoeic words, and then transliteration is a good choice (Huang Lili, 2007: 3). The following chart is the example:

Original	Target
Blood Diamond	《血钻石》
Dances with the Wolves	《与狼共舞》
Troy	《特洛伊》
Harry Potter	《哈利·波特》
Brave Heart	《勇敢的心》
Enemy At The Gates	《兵临城下》
The Truman Show	《楚门的世界》
Life is Beautiful	《美丽人生》
I Am Legend	《我是传奇》
Rush Hour	《尖峰时刻》
National Treasure	《国家宝藏》
17 Again	《重回17岁》
Spider-Man	《蜘蛛侠》
The Mummy	《木乃伊》
Watchmen	《守望者》

B. Aesthetic Skopos

Film title, as a special type of literature, must be simple and appealing, which is aesthetic needs of the film and the skopos is to please the sense of the audiences. Satisfying the aesthetic interest, expecting field and recipient ability of the target audiences is the aesthetic skopos of the film title translation. The strategy or skill the translator uses are commonly Free Translation, in addition with Complementary Translation and Creative Translation.

Free Translation, refers to the linguistic structure of the source language is ignored, and an equivalent is found based on the meaning it conveys. (David Crystal, 1997). As for the film, translators should give the appropriate translation according to the content of the film. Sometimes it needs creation and imagination. Free translation often calls for some techniques, such as omission, extension, conversion and amplification in particular to make the Chinese version beautiful. Look at the following examples:

Original	Plain Translation	Good Translation
The Mission: Impossible	《不可能的任务》	《碟中谍》
Ghost	《鬼魂》	《人鬼情未了》
Leon	《里昂》	《这个杀手不太冷》
Catch Me If You Can	來抓我啊，如果你可以	《神鬼交鋒》《猫捉老鼠》
Twins	《双胞胎》	《龙兄鼠弟》
The Madison Bridge	《麦迪逊桥》	《廊桥遗梦》
Waterloo Bridge	《滑铁卢桥》	《魂断蓝桥》
Speed	《速度》	《生死时速》
The Box	《盒子》	《聚宝盒》
The Incredibles	《难以置信的人》	《超人总动员》《超人一族》
Shrek	《史莱克》	《怪物史莱克》
Kiss of The Dragon	《龙之吻》	《死神之吻》
Life of Something Like It	《如此生活》	《倾情七日》
The Mask	《面具》	《变相怪杰》
You've Got Mail	《你有邮件》	《网络情缘》
A River Runs Through It	《河流穿过》	《大河恋》
Untouchable	《不可触摸》	《铁面无私》

C. Commercial Skopos

Film title is the trademark. It becomes products of commercialization which helps realize both economic return and social effects. The term “commercial” or to put it another way, “vocative” or “appellative” is used in the sense of “calling upon” the audiences to act, think and feel. A name with commercial function must be written in a language that is immediately outstanding to the audiences so as to arouse their interest, make them appreciate the movie and consequently end up with a hit success. So, the commercial function of film title, in popular term, is to require high profit.

For this skopos, translators also like to use the strategy of “Free Translation”. However, The writer wants to mention that, in order to get more profits and attract the audiences, some translators like to add some words, such as 《XX 任务》, 《XX 第六感》, 《XX 追缉令》, 《神鬼 XX》, 《终结 XX》 etc. It has a very bad influence for the audiences. We should strictly obey the principles of translation and make the translation more proper.

D. Cultural Skopos

There exists some cultural difference between western countries and China. Abundant cultural elements have been

added in film title. If the translator directly transfers to the audiences, there are prone to misunderstanding, distortion even mistakes. So as for the translators, they should trace the cultural elements and make a corresponding equivalence on the basis of the target audiences.

So it is necessary for the translators to consider such differences so that their translation can be attracted by the audiences. Under the guidance of skopos theory, in order to make the audiences of target language enjoy the movie and achieve the loyalty and fidelity to the original, translators must take culture into consideration.

For example: The translation of a famous American movie “American Beauty”, was 《美国丽人》 or 《美国大美人》. In fact, it is not correct because American Beauty is a kind of red rosebush in America, blossoms out in four seasons. Such blossom is more like a red rose in China, which symbolizes beauty, purity and love. So they are always rendered between lovers. Somebody in Taiwan therefore modify the translation into 《美国心玫瑰情》, which is more correct and appropriate of Chinese audiences.

“Rat Race” is another example. There is a funny translation 《老鼠赛跑》. So called “funny”, that is because this is a slang in America. We can imagine if so many rats are running in the office, what situation that is? Actually it refers to the severe competition. 《你死我活的竞争》 for reference.

Such examples are much more: the translation of “Seven” is 《七宗罪》 instead of 《七》, who originates from the seven criminals of Bible: gluttony, greed, sloth, lust, pride, envy and wrath. The Dracula movie “Friday the 13” is translated as 《黑色星期五》 instead of 《13日星期五》. Another Hollywood film “The Third Man” is rendered as 《第三者》, which betrayed the movie’s plot, telling the story of the third witness of the car accident. So 《第三个》 or 《第三个人》 《黑狱亡魂》 is used.

Original	misunderstanding	correctness
One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest	飞越杜鹃巢	飞越疯人院
Shanghai Noon	上海正午	正午诱骗
Sister Act	姐妹行动	修女也疯狂
First Wives Club	大老婆俱乐部	原配夫人俱乐部
the First Blood	第一滴血	首战告捷
Ocean’s Eleven	十一罗汉	瞒天过海
All About Eve	伊芙的一切	新夏娃的故事

IV. CONCLUSION

The translation of film title should be simple, understandable and appealing. As for the translators, they should follow the principles of skopos theory: skopos, coherence, fidelity and loyalty as much as possible. Some translation strategies could be adopted according to the audiences’ different requirement.

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