

Based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory Explores the Cross-cultural Adaptability of Chinese Translation of English Film Titles

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Abstract: The title of a film is a highly concise summary of the film and plays a leading role. Therefore, the translation of English film titles should strive to be concise and to the point and grasp the main idea of the film. In addition, it should also be credible and elegant. When we study the film, we cannot ignore the title of the film has the point function. With the continuous development of globalization, English films are widely spread all over the world, and the Chinese translation of their titles plays a crucial role in the promotion and acceptance of films. The research shows that there are differences in power distance, individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and other cultural dimensions between different regions, which reflect the cultural background and values of different regions. The weakness of this paper is that it cannot analyze all existing situations in terms of case studies. At the same time, the thesis puts forward some strategies to improve the cross-cultural adaptability of film title translation in order to promote the development of cross-cultural communication between different countries.

Keywords: Hofstede's cultural dimension theory; Chinese translation of English film titles; Cross-cultural adaptability; Chinese mainland versus Chinese Hong Kong and Taiwan regions

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1. Introduction

Film, as an important art form of cultural export, has a wide audience worldwide. As one of the important symbols of a film, the quality of its Chinese translation directly affects the audience's understanding, acceptance and promotion of a film. To a certain extent, it will also have an impact on the promotion and even film criticism of a film. When translating English movie titles, we should not only consider the accuracy of the translated language, but also make full use of the characteristics of Chinese homonyms in the translation of puns, as well as tightly combine the cultures of different regions to ensure the cross-cultural adaptability of the translation.

Hofstede's cultural dimension theory provides an effective framework for us to study the differences between different cultures. The theory analyzes and compares the cultures of different countries and regions

from five dimensions: power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and short-term orientation. In the above research background, by applying this theory, we can better understand the differences between the Chinese mainland and Chinese Hong Kong and Taiwan regions in the translation of English film titles, as well as the cultural factors behind these differences.

In general, due to the special political situation in China, the research in this area mainly focuses on the phenomenon of “one piece translating multiple titles.” While the main concerns of foreign countries are cultural differences, religion, language and so on, which will become the limiting factors for film title translation and affect its cross-cultural transmission ^[1].

2. Literature review

2.1. Research on the phenomenon of “One piece and multiple translations” in the Chinese version of English films

2.1.1. Foreign research status

At present, there are few researches in this field abroad, most of which focus on the strategy of English film translation, effective translation and ineffective translation of film titles. Translators need to fully consider these background factors to ensure that the translation can accurately convey the content and style of the original work.

The adoption of adaptation as a translation strategy may have a positive impact on foreign films distributed overseas. Chen (2020) puts forward the theory of “four values,” namely information value, cultural value, aesthetic value, and commercial value, as the theoretical basis for analyzing film title translation ^[2]. Marianna (2019) studied effective and ineffective translations of film titles, and found that the function of the film title in the source language may be different from that of the film title in the target language ^[3]. The author concludes that film title translation should balance various value orientations to achieve the best combination of information transmission, cultural communication, and commercial effect. He (2020) showed that after the handover of Chinese Hong Kong’s sovereignty in 1997, Chinese Hong Kong films faced some challenges and changes in the Chinese mainland market ^[4]. On the one hand, Chinese Hong Kong films lost the Chinese mainland market, which prompted the Chinese Hong Kong film industry to develop into a more market-oriented and commercial direction. On the other hand, the Chinese mainland government has also begun to influence and shape the development direction of Chinese Hong Kong films through some policy measures. This trend of “Chinese mainlandization” has brought new challenges to Chinese Hong Kong films. However, Chinese Hong Kong films also tried to cope with these changes through some new creative methods during this period, such as exploring the themes of “post-colonial” and “Chinese characteristics.” Generally speaking, after 1997, Chinese Hong Kong films were looking for their position and development direction in the new political and economic environment ^[5-7].

2.1.2. Domestic research status

The heat of domestic research in this area is high, so the research is relatively perfect. Long (2011) also starts from the choice of domestication and foreignization translation strategies but focuses more on the commercial nature of films ^[8]. Li (2013) compared the translation methods and expression forms of translated names of translators in the three places and used domestication and foreignization translation methods to analyze the differences between the three places in terms of social, historical and cultural background, value orientation and other aspects and their impact on the translation of English film titles ^[9]. Wang (2012) studied the causes

and countermeasures of “one piece and multiple translations,” indicating that translators should not only follow certain translation principles and methods but also have a solid language foundation and rich cultural knowledge in the process of translating film titles to translate film titles with a rigorous attitude ^[10].

2.2. Research on Chinese translation strategies of English films

2.2.1. Foreign research status

Due to its early development in foreign countries, the research on film title translation is relatively complete. In recent years, the research on film title translation mainly focuses on translation methods. Through analysis, it is found that the commonly used methods of film title translation are as follows: literal translation, free translation, additional translation, alternative translation and creative translation.

As for the development of film title translation methods in foreign countries, McMillan (2010) pointed out that films do reflect the differences in the cultural value dimension of individualism-collectivism in different countries, and such differences often lead to conflicts and misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, individualism-collectivism is one of the important components of Hofstede’s cultural dimension theory. Lu (2009) points out that the paper provides examples of translation of English movie titles into other languages, and analyzes different translation strategies and their effects. In general, the translation of movie title needs to balance many factors to create a title that can resonate with the target audience while retaining the essence of the original. As for the influencing factors of film title translation, Alina (2019) believes that in view of cultural differences, language restrictions and marketing considerations, the above four methods of film title translation all have advantages and disadvantages in effectively conveying the essence of the film. Studies have shown that geography, cultural differences, religion and language expression all become the limiting factors for film title translation, which in turn affects its cross-cultural transmission.

2.2.2. Domestic research status

As for the methods of film title translation in China, the analysis shows that the commonly used methods of film title translation are as follows: literal translation, free translation, additional translation, alternative translation, borrowed translation, transliteration and creative translation ^[9]. In terms of translation methods, free translation and literal translation are the three most common methods, and the methods adopted in different regions are also different. In view of these differences, translators should adopt different translation methods according to the actual situation to achieve better communication results. Xi et al. (2020) also put forward a new view through their research that translators have different translation strategies due to different cultural values, and in order to meet the needs of the local cultural market, cross-cultural differences should be an important factor to be considered in translation practice.

As for the phenomenon of “multiple translations of one piece” in the same film, Wang et al. (2018) demonstrated from the perspective of cultural adaptability that the essence of the phenomenon of “one translator and multiple translators” is the common adherence to the cultural change translation strategy, investigated the use of dialect slang and rhetorical devices under the cultural change translation strategy, and put forward suggestions for the translation of film titles in the new era.

The study on the cross-cultural adaptability of film titles has important theoretical and practical significance, which plays a positive role in promoting cultural exchanges, enriching translation theories, and promoting the development of the cultural industry. Hofstede’s cultural dimension theory is applied to the study of film title translation. This paper will study film titles from the perspective of Hofstede’s cultural dimension theory to

provide some suggestions for translators ^[11].

3. An overview of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory

3.1. Power distance

Power distance refers to the degree to which people in a society accept the unequal distribution of power. In cultures with large power distances, people tend to accept hierarchy and authority, while in cultures with smaller power distances, people are more focused on equality and democracy ^[12].

3.2. Individualism vs. collectivism

Individualism emphasizes the interests and rights of the individual, while collectivism emphasizes the interests and solidarity of the group. In an individualistic culture, people are more focused on individual achievement and self-realization, while in a collectivist culture, people are more focused on the honor and interests of the group.

3.3. Masculinity vs. femininity

Masculinity and femininity refer to the differences in values and ways of behaving between men and women in a society. In more masculine cultures, there is a greater emphasis on competition, achievement, and material wealth, while in more feminine cultures, there is a greater emphasis on relationships, cooperation, and quality of life.

3.4. Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty aversion refers to the degree to which people in a society accept uncertainty and risk. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, people are more inclined to develop rules and institutions to reduce uncertainty, while in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, people are more accepting of uncertainty and change.

3.5. Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation

Long-term and short-term orientations refer to the degree to which people in a society are concerned about the future. In a long-term-oriented culture, people are more focused on long-term goals and planning, while in a short-term-oriented culture, people are more focused on immediate benefits and achievements.

4. The characteristics of the Chinese translation of English film titles

4.1. Conciseness

Film titles are usually required to be concise and clear, and to hold the audience's attention in a short time. Therefore, when translating into Chinese, it is necessary to be as concise as possible and avoid long and complicated expressions.

4.2. Artistry

The title of a film is a type of artistic creation, and attention should be paid to artistry when translating into Chinese to make the translated title aesthetic and attractive.

4.3. Cultural adaptability

The Chinese translation of film titles should take into account the differences between different cultures to ensure

that the translated title can be understood and accepted by audiences in the target culture.

5. Differences in the translation of English film titles between the Chinese mainland and Chinese Hong Kong and Taiwan regions

5.1. Power distance

Example (1), source word: Brave Heart

Chinese translation: Braveheart

Chinese Hong Kong translation: Heroes

Taiwan region translation: Surprise in the world

Power distance refers to the degree to which people of low status in a society accept the unequal distribution of power in a society or organization. In a culture with a larger power distance, people are more inclined to accept hierarchy and authority, and the movie title translation may emphasize the heroic image or status of the protagonist. While in cultures with smaller power distances, film titles may place more emphasis on equality and individual value. It can be seen that Chinese Hong Kong titles put more emphasis on the heroic image of the main character, while Taiwan region and Chinese mainland titles pay more attention to the emotion and theme of the film.

5.2. Individualism versus collectivism

Example (2), source word: The Shawshank Redemption

Chinese translation: The Shawshank Redemption

Taiwan region translation: Stimulus 1995

Chinese Hong Kong translation: The Moon is Black and Flying High

In individualistic societies, the relationships between people are less tight, and people may care more about themselves and the small groups they are affiliated with than loose ones. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, focus on ethnicity, that is, the larger group to which individuals belong, care about the extended family, where strong ethnic ties provide continuous protection, and individuals must be loyal to the group. In individualistic cultures, film titles may highlight the character's traits and experiences. While in a collectivist culture, a film title may place more emphasis on the group's fate and emotions. Chinese mainland translations emphasize the protagonist's journey of redemption. Taiwan region translations put more emphasis on the excitement and tension of the film, while Chinese Hong Kong's translated microfilms add a touch of legend.

5.3. Uncertainty avoidance

Example (3), source Arrival

Chinese translation: Arrival

Taiwan region translation: Alien Star Entry

Chinese Hong Kong translation: Heaven came down

Uncertainty avoidance refers to whether a society avoids and controls uncertainty through formal channels when it is threatened by uncertain events and unconventional circumstances. In cultures with a high degree of uncertainty avoidance, film titles may be more inclined to use clear, direct expressions to avoid misunderstandings by the audience ^[13]. In cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, film titles may be more creative and imaginative. It can be seen that the Chinese Hong Kong titles are more imaginative, while the

Taiwan region and Chinese mainland titles are more direct and explicit.

6. Factors affecting the cross-cultural adaptability of English film titles in Chinese translation

6.1. Cultural difference

The cultural differences of different countries and regions are important factors affecting the cross-cultural adaptability of English film titles translated into Chinese. Cultural differences include differences in values, beliefs, customs, historical background, and so on. These differences will lead to different understandings and acceptance of film titles by audiences in different regions.

6.2. Language differences

Language difference is also an important factor affecting the cross-cultural adaptability of the translation of English film titles into Chinese. There are differences in vocabulary, grammar, and semantics among different languages, which will affect the accuracy and fluency of translation. At the same time, the language habits and expressions of different regions are also different, which will also affect the translation effect of movie titles.

6.3. Audience demand

Audience demand is also an important factor affecting the cross-cultural adaptability of English film titles translated into Chinese. Audiences in different regions have different needs and preferences for movies, which will also affect the translation of movie titles. For example, audiences in some regions pay more attention to the artistry and depth of a film, while others pay more attention to its entertainment and sense of fashion

7. Strategies to improve the cross-cultural adaptability of translating English film titles into Chinese

7.1. Strengthening cultural communication

Strengthening cultural exchanges between different countries and regions and enhancing mutual understanding and understanding can improve the cross-cultural adaptability of the translation of English film titles into Chinese. Through cultural exchanges, translators can better understand the differences between different cultures, to convey the information and cultural connotation of the original text more accurately when translating film titles.

7.2. Focus on language learning

Translators should constantly improve their language level and master the differences and characteristics of different languages to improve the accuracy and fluency of translation. At the same time, translators also need to understand the language habits and expressions of different regions so that they can better match the language habits of local audiences when translating film titles ^[14,15].

7.3. Paying attention to audience needs

Translators should pay attention to the needs and preferences of audiences in different regions, and translate film titles according to the needs and preferences of audiences. For example, for some audiences who pay attention to artistry and depth, some words with a sense of history and cultural heritage can be used to translate film titles; For some audiences who pay attention to entertainment and fashion sense, some fashionable and popular words

can be used to translate the movie title.

7.4. Use a variety of translation methods

Translators can adopt a variety of translation methods to improve the cross-cultural adaptability of the translation of English film titles into Chinese. For example, translators can adopt literal translation, free translation, transliteration, and other methods to choose the appropriate translation method according to different situations. At the same time, translators can also use methods such as adding notes and explaining to help the audience better understand the meaning and cultural connotation of the film's title.

8. Conclusion

These differences reflect the cultural backgrounds and values of different regions and also affect the cross-cultural adaptability of film title translation into Chinese. To improve the cross-cultural adaptability of Chinese translation of English film titles, we can strengthen cultural communication, pay attention to language learning, pay attention to audience needs, and adopt a variety of translation methods. Through the implementation of these strategies, we can better promote cross-cultural communication and the development of the film industry.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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