

# An Analysis of Subtitle Translation from the Perspective of Ecological Translatology -- A Case Study of Turning Red

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**Abstract:** In an age defined by globalization, the film and television market is thriving, and subtitle translation, as a key link in the dissemination of film and television content, is becoming more and more important. By taking Turning Red, an animated feature, as a prime example, this paper builds its theoretical foundation on ecological translation theory. The aim is to explore how subtitle translation makes adaptive choices and employs conversion strategies within the language, culture, and communication dimensions. In the linguistic dimension, the conversion strategies in vocabulary and syntax are analysed; the cultural dimension aims to deal with cultural differences in translation and realize the accurate transmission of cultural information; and the communication dimension pays attention to the retention of humorous elements and the transmission of emotions. In the study of film and television translation, the subtitle translation of Turning Red can optimize the translation strategy and improve the cross-cultural adaptability of the film with the help of ecological translation theory. At the same time, translators need to make appropriate adjustments in different dimensions. By building a bridge between the theory and practice of film and television translation, this study not only provides a professional theoretical basis for subtitle translation, but also offers solutions to cross the cultural divide and reduce cultural misinterpretation, so as to build a solid foundation for the wide dissemination of film and television works around the world.

**Key words:** ecological translation studies, subtitle translation, Turning Red

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Current situation of domestic subtitle translation research

Domestic subtitle translation research has made remarkable progress in recent years. Researchers have come to realize that subtitle translation carries not only linguistic information, but also the important task of transmitting multiculturalism. In the process of translation, it is necessary to take into account the acceptance and comprehension of viewers in different cultural backgrounds. For example, when some films and television shows with Chinese cultural characteristics are disseminated overseas, how to accurately translate the cultural elements contained in them has become the focus of research.

In recent years, with the rise of

interdisciplinary research, subtitle translation research has also begun to combine with other disciplines. Meanwhile, with the development of technology, the application of machine translation in the field of subtitle translation is getting hotter and hotter day by day. Although China has carried out a lot of research in the field of subtitle translation, it is undeniable that there are still some areas for improvement in the current research, such as the depth and breadth of the research needs to be further expanded, some of the research lacks systematic and theoretical, and the research data collection and analysis methods need to be improved. All these problems need to be solved in future research.

### 1.2 Main Principles and techniques of subtitle translation

Subtitle translation represents a unique

form of cross - cultural communication whose fundamental Principle lies in striking a harmonious balance among language, culture, and communication while maintaining fidelity to the original content. During the translation Process, translators must Prioritize faithfulness to the source text. They should simultaneously take into account the cultural background and comprehension ability of the target audience and tactfully employ diverse translation methods. This approach ensures that the translated subtitles not only precisely convey the original meaning but also align with the audience ' s viewing expectations, thus facilitating cross - cultural communication.

First of all, translators need to follow the Principle of faithfulness, and be faithful to and respect the original text in the Process of translation, so as to achieve interlingual coherence between the translated text and the original text. On the basis of faithfulness to the original text, the translator should consider the language style of the target language, and also fully understand the context, choose the suitable language to express the emotion of the original text, so that the audience can fully feel the charm of the film's language. Secondly, the Principle of Purpose is an important guide for subtitle translation. The Purpose of subtitle translation may include cultural transmission, entertainment or educational inspiration. Coherence is the key to subtitle translation. The translator needs to ensure the coherence of the translation at different levels, so that the subtitles are synchronised with the Picture, sound and Plot of the film. Through the comprehensive application of these Principles, the translator is able to effectively balance the fidelity of the original text with the adaptability of the translated text, achieving high quality and effectiveness of subtitle translation.

In terms of skills, Domestication and free

translation Play an important role in subtitle translation. The translator can use the strategy of naturalisation or Paraphrasing to transform the cultural information in the source language into a form of expression that is easy to be understood by the target language audience. For example, if the Chinese Proverb "bu dao huang he xin bu si" is translated as "not reaching the Yellow River, the heart won' t die", the target audience may have difficulty understanding the meaning. At this time, the translator can translate it into "never give up until the last hope is gone" through free translation, which not only retains the meaning of determination and persistence of the original text, but also makes it easy for the audience to understand. In addition, the use of rhetoric is also a skill that cannot be ignored in subtitle translation. Through the use of simile, metaphor and other rhetorical devices, translators can enhance the expression and appeal of language, and make subtitles more vivid. For example, "ta de xiao rong xiang yang guang yi yang wen nuan" can be translated as "Her smile is as warm as sunshine", retaining the metaphorical device of the original while conveying warm emotions. For culture-loaded words, such techniques as annotation, paraphrasing and substitution are usually used. For example, "a piece of cake" is translated as "xiao cai yi die"; "One man' s meat is another man' s poison" is translated as "luo bo qing cai, ge you suo ai".

## 2. Overview of ecological translation theories

### 2.1 Definition and history of ecotranslation studies

Ecological translation is an emerging interdisciplinary discipline that combines the concept of ecology with translation research. It analogises translation activity as an ecosystem, which covers a variety of ecological elements

such as the original text, the translator, the reader, and the language, culture, and communication in which they are located, which interact and depend on each other, and together constitute the ecological environment of translation. From the definition point of view, eco-translation can be understood as a theoretical system that takes ecology as the philosophical basis and translation as the theoretical basis, and explores the relationship between the translator and the ecological environment of translation in the process of translation, as well as how to realise the adaptive transformation of translated text in this relationship. In 2001, Professor Hu Gengshen put forward the concept of 'translation ecological environment', which marked the germination of ecological translation. Since then, he has continued to deepen his research, combined with the own characteristics of translation, and gradually built up the theoretical framework of ecological translation studies. In recent years, Ecological Translation Studies has attracted wide attention in the academic circles at home and abroad, scholars have conducted in-depth discussions on the theoretical connotation and practical application of ecological translation from different perspectives, which further enriches and improves this discipline system. The development process of ecological translation fully reflects its theoretical innovation and practical adaptability. With the deepening of translation research, eco-translation will continue to play an important role and inject new vitality into the development of the translation discipline.

## 2.2 Core Concepts of ecological translology

Three core elements lie at the heart of ecological translation: Placing the translator at the center, the mechanisms of adaptation and selection, and the practice of three-dimensional transformation. These concepts

constitute the cornerstone of the theory of ecological translation. Providing a clear guiding direction for translation research and practice. In Ecological Translation Studies, the translator is regarded as the main body of the translation ecosystem. Translators have a high degree of autonomy and mobility in the translation process, and their translation behavior is influenced by many factors, including the translator's personal knowledge, the linguistic characteristics of the original text, the cultural background, and the purpose of translation. Adaptation and Selection is the core viewpoint of Ecological Translation. Translators need to flexibly adjust their translation strategies according to different translation tasks and objectives in order to achieve the best translation results. The process of adaptation and choice runs through all aspects of translation, including language conversion, cultural transmission and the realisation of communicative functions. Three-dimensional conversion is an important means for translators to realise adaptive choices, including the conversion of linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. In terms of linguistic dimension, different languages have their own expression habits and norms, and the translator needs to make targeted adjustments to the vocabulary and grammar of the source language according to these characteristics; the core of the cultural dimension lies in conveying cultural connotations, and the culture of the source language contains unique concepts, imagery, and values, so the translator not only needs to retain its cultural characteristics, but also needs to take into account the cultural cognitive level of the target language readers, so as to prevent comprehension barriers; the communication dimension is aimed at realizing communication intentions. The core purpose of the communicative dimension lies in

bringing the communicative intention to fruition. Therefore, translators need to make certain that the translated version can produce an equivalent communicative outcome as the original text within the target language context, so that the readers can understand the intention of the author of the original text, and thus realise the smooth progress of cross-cultural communication. These three dimensions are interrelated and mutually influential, and together they play a key role in maintaining the balance and stability of the translation ecosystem.

### 3. Case study on subtitle translation of *Turning Red*

#### 3.1 Linguistic dimension

In the process of translation, the difference between the source language and the target language in terms of linguistic form is a key factor that translators cannot ignore when they carry out linguistic conversion, which is directly related to whether the translated text can accurately express the meaning and reproduce the style tone of the original, and plays a decisive role in the translation effect. Translators should focus on two key aspects: vocabulary selection and syntactic adjustment. Through these measures, the translated text can blend into the target - language environment. In addition, the essential meaning and emotional overtones of the original work are accurately conveyed.

##### 3.1.1 Lexical level

Example 1: Original text: "I'm Meilin Lee, and ever since I turned 13, life's been a lot". Translation: "wo shi li fu lin, zo cong wo man 13 sui yi lai, sheng huo jiu bian de feng fu duo cai." Analysis: 'a lot' in the original is a vague expression, but in the translation it is specified as 'feng fu duo cai', which retains the semantics of the original and makes the expression more vivid, in line with the Chinese

habit of expression.

Example 2: Original text: "I will guard it with my life!", Translation: "wo hui yong sheng ming shou hu ta !" Analysis: The word 'guard' in the original sentence is translated as "shou hu", a term often used in Chinese to express a strong desire to protect, which is more appropriate than the direct translation "bao wei".

Example 3: Original text: "That degenerate won't come near you again". Translation: "na ge huai dan zai ye bu hui jie jin ni le." Analysis: The word "degenerate" has a pejorative meaning in English, referring to a morally corrupt person. In the translation, the translator chooses the word "huai dan", which not only conveys the pejorative colour of the original word, but also makes the dialogue closer to everyday speech and enhances the authenticity of the context.

##### 3.1.2 Syntactic level

Example 4: Original text: "I'm not going to regret this, am I?" Translation: "wo bu hui hou hui de, dui ba?" Analysis: The rhetorical question 'am I?' in the original is a common expression in English, used to seek confirmation or emphasis. The translator translates it as 'dui ma?', which not only retains the rhetorical tone of the original, but also conforms to the Chinese expression. This translation not only retains the rhetorical tone of the original text, but also conforms to the Chinese expression habit, making it easier for the audience to understand and accept. This translation strategy embodies the principle of adaptation and selection in ecological translation, i.e., the translator chooses and adjusts according to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the target language.

Example 5: Original text: "Mei, breathe. It's in the bag." Translation: "meimei, shen hu xi, wo men shi na jiu wen le." Analysis: in the original, "breathe" is a verb, "it's in the bag" is an

idiom, indicating that the success of something is certain, often used to express high confidence in the outcome, and here it is translated as “shi na jiu wen”, which not only retains the semantic meaning of the original, but also adapts to the expression habits of Chinese. This syntactic conversion not only makes the translation more fluent, but also enhances the emotional expression of the sentence.

Through the analysis of the subtitles of *Youth Metamorphosis* at the lexical and syntactic levels, it can be seen that in the process of translating the linguistic dimension, the translator has fully considered the characteristics of the Chinese and English languages, and through flexible and varied conversion strategies, the translation is made to be more in line with the Chinese expression habits on the basis of retaining the semantics of the original text, so as to provide the audience with a fluent movie-viewing experience.

### 3.2 Cultural dimension

Subtitle translation is not only a conversion of language, but also a bridge of culture. During translation, when it comes to making adaptive choices on the cultural dimension, translators must zero in on effectively conveying the cultural connotations inherent in both the source and target languages. As there are significant differences between different cultures, the translator should take these differences into full consideration and use appropriate translation strategies to make the translated text conform to the audience's cognitive modes and acceptance habits at the cultural level, to avoid cultural misunderstandings, and to effectively promote cultural exchanges. *Kung Fu Panda 4*, as an animated film with a large number of Chinese cultural elements, is particularly critical in its subtitle translation in terms of cultural

dimension.

#### 3.2.1 Transmission of Cultural Imagery

Example 6: Original text: “What a diva!” Translation: “shua da Pai ne” Analysis: “diva” originally refers to the heroine of the opera, and later it is commonly used to describe those who have a big temper, mostly related to the entertainment industry or the field of art. “shu da Pai” is a common Chinese expression to describe people who put on airs. It vividly shows the arrogant image contained in “diva” and successfully conveys this image with Western cultural characteristics, so that Chinese audiences can understand the attitude expressed by the character.

Example 7: Original text: “The red Panda has blessed our family with good fortune and Prosperity.” Translation: “hong xiong mai bao you le wo men de jia zu, gei le wo men hao yun yi ji fan rong.” Analysis: The red Panda is not common in Chinese culture, but in the film it is given a symbolic meaning similar to that of the traditional Chinese culture's ‘lucky animal’. Through the word “bao you”, the translation associates the red Panda with good luck and Prosperity, enabling Chinese audiences to quickly understand its cultural connotation, while at the same time retaining the cultural imagery of the original text, allowing the audience to feel the unique cultural atmosphere of the film.

#### 3.2.2 Treatment of cultural differences

Example 8: Original text: “I thought, if I watched you like a hawk, I'd see the signs and be able to prepare.” Translation: “wo yi wei, ru guo wo xiang ying yi yang guan zhu zhe ni, wo neng kan dao zheng zhao, neng you suo zhun bei.” Analysis: In Western culture, “watch like a hawk” is often used to describe a high degree of concern and vigilance. The translation adapts to the Chinese audience's cultural perception by using the image of “xiang ying yi yang guan zhu

zhe ni” , and at the same time retains the metaphor and semantics of the original text, so that the audience can understand the mother's concern and protectiveness.

Example 9: Original text: “I'm 13! Deal with it!” Translation: “wo yi jing 13 sui le, mian dui xian shi ba.” Analysis: In the original text, “Deal with it” is a typical Western expression with the meaning of challenge and resistance. By using the Chinese expression “mian dui xian shi ba”, the translation not only retains the challenging nature of the original text, but also adapts the Chinese cultural expression of teenage growth. This translation is able to better convey the cultural differences in the original text, while allowing the Chinese audience to understand the emotional conflict.

Example 10: Original text: “I'm born to do this.” Translation: “na shi wo yu sheng ju lai de yong qi.” Analysis: The phrase ‘born to do this’ in the original text conveys a sense of destiny or giftedness in English. In Chinese, although there is no exact equivalent, the translator conveys a similar sense of destiny and self-confidence through this expression, while maintaining the fluency and naturalness of the statement.

The treatment of cultural dimension is crucial to ensure the accuracy and acceptability of the translated text. Through appropriate transmission of cultural imagery and treatment of cultural differences, the translated text can cross the language barrier so that Chinese audiences can fully understand and feel the cultural connotations and emotional expressions in the film. These translation strategies not only enhance the quality of subtitles, but also promote the exchange and understanding of Eastern and Western cultures.

### 3.3 Communicative dimension

Throughout the translation process,

addressing the communicative dimension obliges translators to evaluate if the translated text can replicate the communicative function of the original within the target - language cultural landscape. Translators must first accurately transmit the communicative intention encapsulated in the original text. Simultaneously, they should preserve the distinct style of the source material. This dual - pronged approach enables readers of the translated text to have a reading experience mirroring that of the original text. By doing so, translation becomes an effective vehicle for intercultural communication, bridging the gap between different cultures and facilitating the effective exchange of ideas.

#### 3.3.1 Retention of elements of humor

Example 11: Original text: “Are you a triangle? Cause you acute!” Translation: “ni shi san jiao xing ma? Yin wei ni hen min rui.” Analysis: This is a pun using the word ‘acute’, which means both “jian rui de” in relation to the characteristics of the triangle, and “min rui de” to compliment the other person. The translation cleverly retains the humour of this pun, using the same form of expression to allow the audience to understand the literal meaning and at the same time appreciate the humour.

Example 12: Original text: “You sicko! What were you thinking?” Translation: “ni zhe xiao bian tai ni zai xiang shen me ne?” Analysis: “You sicko” is a typical English colloquial expression used to describe someone whose behaviour or ideas are unusual or unpleasant. The word “sicko” carries a strong tone of flirtation and exaggeration, and the translation succeeds in retaining the humour of the original sentence by using the slightly flirtatious word “xiao bian tai”.

#### 3.3.2 Communication of emotions

Example 13: Original text: “I'm not a gross red

monster.” Translation: “wo bu shi ge e xin de hong guai wu!” Analysis: In the original, “gross red monster” expresses the character’s confusion and struggle about his identity. The sentence “e xin de hong guai wu” in the translation not only retains the emotional color of the original, but also further strengthens the character’s inner conflict through the adjective “e xin”, so that the audience can feel the character’s emotional fluctuations more deeply.

Example 14: Original text: “I hate this! I’m sloppy, I’m smelly. My mom won’t even look at me...” Translation: “wo tao yan zhe yang wo you la ta you chou. Wo ma shen zhi dou bu kan wo” Analysis: The words “sloppy” and “smelly” in the original text expressed the characters’ dissatisfaction and anxiety in Smelly. Through the sentence “you la ta you chou”, the translation not only retains the emotional color of the original text, but also further strengthens the character’s feeling of loneliness and neglect through the sentence “wo ma shen zhi dou bu kan wo”, so that the audience can feel the character’s inner world more deeply.

Example 15: Original text: “You are her Pride and Joy, so act like it!” Translation: “ni shi ta de jiao ao he kuai le, bu yao rang ta shi wang!” Analysis: The expression “Pride and joy” in the original text expresses the mother’s deep affection for her daughter. The expression “jiao ao he kuai le” in the translation not only retains the emotional color of the original text, but also further strengthens the emotional bond between the characters through the sentence “bu yao rang ta shi wang”, so that the audience can feel the emotion between the mother and daughter more deeply.

Through the analysis of the subtitle translation of Youth Metamorphosis in terms of humorous elements retention and emotional communication, it can be seen that the translator’s conversion in the communicative

dimension effectively

Promotes the cross-cultural communication of the film. The translator has fully considered the cultural background and acceptance habits of the target audience, so that when the audience enjoys the film, they can not only understand the plot, but also feel the humorous atmosphere of the film, and resonate with the characters emotionally, which achieves a good communicative effect.

#### 4. Conclusion

Ecological translation provides a systematic theoretical framework for subtitle translation, emphasizing the translator’s ability to adapt and choose in the three-dimensional space of language, culture and communication. Subtitle translation occupies a key position in cross-cultural communication, due to its time and space constraints, which requires the translator not only to accurately convey the information and cultural connotations, but also to stimulate the audience’s emotional resonance. In the specific translation process, translators need to cleverly use various translation strategies according to different situations, so that these three dimensions of conversion can cooperate with each other and reach unity. This research on subtitle translation based on three-dimensional conversion, on the one hand, broadens the research horizons of subtitle translation theory and promotes the further development of related theories; on the other hand, it also provides translators with practical operational methods. In the future, subtitle translation can further draw on the concept of eco-translation to optimize translation strategies, so as to better adapt to the multicultural context and help the cross-cultural communication of film and television works.

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