On Subtitle Translation of "Frozen" from the Perspective of Halliday's Register Theory

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Abstract

As a Disney 3D animated film, "Frozen", based on Andersen's fairy tale "Snow Queen", was produced to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Disney's founding. The film tells the story of the small country Arendale, which is permanently covered by ice and snow due to a magic spell. In order to retrieve the summer, Princess Anna, the mountain people Christopher and his reindeer partner set out in a team to embark on an adventure to save the kingdom. The research object of this thesis is the Chinese version of subtitle translation of "Frozen". Register theory is an important content of the Systemic Functional School represented by Halliday. This paper extracts several paragraphs from the subtitle translation of "Frozen" as research materials, and analyzes them from the perspectives of field, mode and tenor. This paper includes four parts. The first part is a background introduction, the second part is an introduction to register theory, the third part analyzes the subtitle translation of the movie "Frozen" from the perspective of register theory, and the fourth part is a summary.

Keywords: Frozen, Register theory, Translation strategy

1. Background Introduction

The story of Frozen does not follow a single Disney style, but rather enhances the power of family love. Out of self blame, Elsa dared not easily touch this familial relationship, but gradually distanced herself from her sister. While, as a member of the royal family, the princess faced the choice of marriage after reaching adulthood. Sister Elsa failed to prevent her sister from marrying the wrong person, creating a deadly magic that froze the entire kingdom. As a result, saving the fate of the kingdom became the main thread of the story. The film won the Best Animated Feature at the Golden Globe Awards, Annie Awards, and Oscars in 2013. With a global box office of 1.274 billion US dollars, "Frozen" became the world's top grossing film in animation history, ranking fifth on the film history box office chart. The film achieved great success and was translated into multiple languages for release in various countries. After collecting a large amount of information, it has been found that many scholars have conducted considerable research on the subtitle translation of "Frozen", but most of these studies are based on Skopos Theory or Adaptation Theory, and few of them concentrate on the register theory. Instead, this thesis analyzes the subtitle translation of "Frozen" from the perspectives of field, tenor, and mode.

2. Introduction to Register Theory

The register theory is an important content of the systemic functional school represented by Halliday (1990), which was first proposed by Reid (1956) in studying bilingual phenomena. In accordance with the theory of functional grammar, register is composed of language features associated with various situational features, especially those with discourse scope (field), discourse mode (mode), and discourse style (tenor). From this, it can be seen that register is a functional variant of discourse that is produced in practical use for a specific communicative occasion in order to achieve a communicative purpose. It is a comprehensive reflection of various factors, namely field of course, tenor of course, and mode of course.

Halliday believes that language has three major functions, namely ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function. Ideational function refers to the ability of people to express their experiences in the real and inner world through languages, interpersonal function indicates the ability of a speaker to use language to participate in social activities, and textual function means the function of language itself and its connection with register. Halliday established corresponding relationships between the three major functions of language, namely three elements of the situational context. Based on Gregory and Carroll (1978), the field of course is mainly related to the conceptual functions of language, mainly reflected in the different choices of vocabulary, transitive relationships, and logical relationships at the level of language structure. The tenor of course is mainly associated with the interpersonal function of language, which is the

different choices of mood, modality system, and vocabulary used to express attitudes. Moreover, the mode of course connects with the discourse function of language, mainly in the different choices of thematic structure, information structure, and cohesion.

According to the above register theory, in order to achieve communicative purposes, it is necessary to grasp the three aspects of register. As per Deng Yanchang (1989), translation is a form of communication using language, while in this communication process, it involves two languages and participants from two different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, translation is a form of cross-cultural or multilingual communication. In order to ensure the accuracy of information translation, these three elements must complement each other so as to ultimately maintain consistency among the usage situation, communication purpose, and communication object.

2. On Subtitle Translation of "Frozen" from the Perspective of Register Theory

The original text is the subtitle of "Frozen". In terms of text type, based on Katharine Reiss's classification of discourse types, one of the most important representatives of German functionalist translation theory, this text belongs to the expressive text type. Next, the author will analyze the register of the subtitle translation from three aspects: field, tenor, and mode.

3.1 Field

Field refers to the actual environment in which language occurs, including scenes and topics. Field constitutes the discourse scope, and in subtitle translation, it is the dialogue between characters. The following example comes from "Frozen".

Example 1

ST:

Born of cold and winter air. And mountain rain combining. This icy force both foul and fair, has a frozen heart worth mining. So cut through the heart, cold and clear.Strike for love and and strike for fear. See the beauty, sharp and dear. Split the ice apart and broke the frozen heart. Hup! Ho! Watch your step!Let it go!

TT:

隆冬严寒，漫天雨雪。冰封之力，无情又无私。深藏一颗值得挖掘的冻结之心。切开冰冷清澈的结晶。对这冰雪又爱又恨。视其之美，锋利而纯粹。割开坚冰，打碎冰雪之心。嘿！呦！留神脚下!别逞强！

This paragraph appears at the beginning of the film. Comparing the original text with the translated one, it can be clearly seen that the translator adopts a literal translation method for most of the content, with only one sentence using a free translation. The translator translates "let it go" as "别逞强", while the other two versions translated it as "随它吧"and "停下来" respectively. The author believes that in this contextual context, it is more appropriate to translate "Let it go" as "别逞强". At the beginning of the film, the scene is: in the extremely cold weather, several strong men holding sharp knives are chiseling ice. "别逞强" is consistent with the content expressed in the text. Presented in the form of a song, it is rhythmic, which makes the audience feel as if the song is a slogan for chiseling ice and feel excited. Observing the images of several strong men in the film, they hold sharp knives with consistent rhythm and movements and work together to achieve the goal of breaking the heart of ice and snow. The field of the original language is that the heart of ice and snow is terrifying, and the entire kingdom is united to break the heart of ice and snow. When the original text "Hup! Ho! Watch your step! Let it go!" appears in the film, it presents several strong men with consistent movements and rhythm, standing in a dangerous bay fishing for large and solid ice blocks. If they are not careful, they will slide into the ice cave, which is very dangerous. Therefore, the translator translates "let it go" here as "别逞强", which can demonstrate mutual love and unity among teammates on the one hand; on the other hand, it can also indirectly imply that the audience's heart of ice and snow is extremely powerful. So, the translation is in line with the original language field. The other two translations, "随它吧" and "停下来", appear particularly dramatic in the translation, making the audience feel abrupt and inconsistent with the film's presentation. Translators must base their translation on a thorough understanding of the original text, and then choose the most appropriate equivalence from the target language to strive for accuracy.

Example 2

ST:

Anna: Elsa. Psst!

Anna: Elsa.

Anna: Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

Elsa: Anna, go back to sleep please.

Anna: I just can't. The sky's awake, so I'm awake.

Elsa: Go play by yourself.

TT:

喂，艾尔莎。

安娜：艾尔莎。

安娜：醒醒，醒醒，快醒醒。

安娜：安娜，快睡去睡觉吧。

艾尔莎：我就是睡不着，天上有光，我就是睡不着。

艾尔莎：你自己去玩吧。

This paragraph also appears at the beginning of the movie, and the scene of the original text is that young Anna is mischievous and wants her sister Elsa to play with her. The story background of this movie is set in Denmark, so the colorful light is aurora. Based on the movie footage, it can be seen that the aurora outside the window shines on young Anna, which makes her naturally unable to sleep. The translator paraphrased "The sky's awake" as " 天上有光", rather than simply translating it as "天还醒着". "The sky's awake" does not conform to Chinese expression habits, and its meaning can not be expressed as "天还醒着" in Chinese. Although such a translation has rhetorical effects, it is too rigid. Instead, translating it as "天上有光" is appropriate. Firstly, the audience of "Frozen" is mostly children, and "天上有光" is in line with the expression of children, which can show the children's thinking world and make it full of childlike fun; secondly, "天上有光" is consistent with the movie scene since just outside the window comes a beam of light; furthermore, the expression "天上有光" is direct, and children can easily understand what it means. When children see the expression "天空醒着", they need time to reflect on what it means. Because the movie transitions quickly, it is obvious that direct expression is more appropriate. In accordance with Yang Xianyu (2010), if the language form of the original text is not completely equivalent to that of the translated text with the same ideological content, free translation should be used. In summary, "天上有光" is more in line with the original language field.

3.2 Tenor

The tenor refers to the identity, nature, and relationships of participants, including their social status and role relationships. The tenor characteristics change with changes in social activities. Next, how to achieve equivalence of discourse will be illustrated through the following cases in "Frozen".

Example 3

ST:

Hans: I'm so sorry. Are you hurt?

Anna: Hey! L-ya, no. No. I'm okay.

Hans:Are you sure?

Anna:Yeah，i just wasn't looking where i was going. But i am great, actually.

Hans:Oh ,thank goodness.

Hans:Prince Hans of the Southern Isles

Anna:Princess Anna of Arendelle.

Hans:Princess...?

Hans:My lady

TT:

安娜：我很抱歉。你受伤了吗？

安娜：你好，不，我没事。

汉斯：你确定吗？

安娜：没错，是我走路不小心。但我真的没事

汉斯：哦，谢天谢地

汉斯：我是南部群岛的汉斯王子

安娜：我是阿伦戴尔的安娜公主

哈斯：公主？

汉斯：公主殿下

Hans is the prince of the Southern Islands, and Anna is the princess of Arendale. Prince Hans came from the Southern Islands to attend the coronation ceremony of Anna's sister Elsa, and they met for the first time in the

Kingdom of Arendale. Anna, who was lively by nature, bumped into Hans' horse when she first met him. Hans immediately apologized to Anna, and Princess Anna also responded friendly to him. It can be seen that before the two people knew each other's identity, the conversation was relaxed and casual, and the audience could feel the subtle magnetic field between the two young men and women from their conversation. Such expressions as "Yeah，i just wasn't looking where i was going", "Oh, thank goodness", "没错, 是我走路不小心" and "哦, 谢天谢地" perfectly fit the identity relationship of an ordinary young man and woman. After the two men explained their relationship with each other, Prince Hans immediately said "my lady" and "Royal Highness Princess", which was consistent with the identity relationship between the prince and the princess. Whether before or after knowing the identity, the relationship between the participants in the conversation can be reflected, thus achieving the equivalence in tenor.

Example 4

ST:
The King: Please, help my daughter!
The troll: Your majesty. Born with the powers or cursed.
The King: Born. And they're getting stronger.
The troll: You are lucky it wasn't her heart. The heart is not so easily changed, but the head can be persuaded.
The King: Do what you must.
TT:
国王：请帮帮我女儿。
地精：国王陛下，是生来就有还是中了诅咒？
国王：生来就有，而且法力越来越强了。
地精：幸好伤的不是她的心 。心不容易恢复，头却不难治好。
国王：尽你所能，做你必须做的。

When Anna and Elsa were playing together at a young age, Elsa's innate magic accidentally injured Anna. The only way to save Anna is to find the goblins. Goblins are ancient creatures that live in distant valleys. The king, queen, and Elsa took Anna to find the goblins. As soon as he arrived at the goblin's house, the king who was eager to save his daughter shouted, "Please, help my daughter"! Even the king, who is above all else, would lower his status as a king when faced with the danger of his daughter's life. He seemed to have forgotten that he is the king, which is in line with the king's identity as a father. When the goblin informed the king that his daughter could be saved, the king's nervous mood was greatly relieved. At this time, the king gradually returned to his own identity, which was fully reflected in his words. At this moment, the king said, "Do what you must". The king's words at this time are imperative, fully reflecting his majesty and also in line with his identity as the king. Thus, the entire translation achieves the equivalence of tenor before and after.

3.3 Mode

Mode refers to the way language is expressed, including communication channels, media, and rhetorical devices. Communication methods vary according to the changes in the communication object, and different communication methods can also reflect different tenors.

Example 5:

ST:

Anna: I'll bring her back, and I'll make this right.

Hans: I'm coming with you...

Anna: No.

Anna: I need you here to take care of Arendelle.

Hans: On my honor.

Anna: I leave Prince Hans in charge.

TT:

安娜：我会把她找回来，让这里恢复正常。
汉斯：我跟你一起去。

安娜：不！
安娜：我需要你留下来帮我照顾阿伦戴尔。
汉斯：愿尽绵薄之力。
安娜：我委托汉斯王子管理这里。

At the celebration party of Elsa's coronation ceremony, Anna brought her newly met Prince Hans and informed Elsa that they were getting married. As a result, Anna's decision was strongly opposed by Elsa, and Anna stubbornly believed that her decision was correct, ultimately causing Elsa to lose control in front of everyone and revealing the fact that she was using magic. At this moment, Elsa immediately became the target of criticism, forcing her to escape from the Kingdom of Allendell. Anna felt guilty because she had caused her sister to lose control and get into trouble. So, Anna decided to go and find Elsa back. Before leaving, she said to Prince Hans, "I need you here to take care of Arendelle", "我需要你留下来帮我照顾阿伦戴尔". Furthermore, she said to everyone around her, "I leave Prince Hans in charge", "我委托汉斯王子管理这里". In the same language field, as the tenor changes, the mode also changes immediately. At this time, Anna regarded Prince Hans as her lover, so her way of speaking to him was very gentle. At the same time, with a deliberative tone, her speaking attitude was also very sincere. While, Anna had a commanding tone towards the people around her. Firstly, because Anna is a princess of the Kingdom of Arendale, this tone of voice is in line with her identity; secondly, such a strong tone made it easier for soldiers to obey Prince Hans, so that Prince Hans could manage the Kingdom of Arendale during her absence. The translation of these two sentences is close to the original text, fully achieving the equivalence in tenor.

4. Conclusion

This paper studies the excerpts of subtitle translation for the movie "Frozen", introduces Halliday's register theory, and analyzes the translation quality from three perspectives: field, tenor, and mode. The above analysis can conclude that scenario is an important consideration factor in subtitle translation, and when doing subtitle translation, it is necessary to choose an appropriate translation based on the context. The register theory has important guiding significance for the translation of subtitles. Besides, field, tenor, and mode provide a new perspective for the study of subtitle translation. The widespread use of register theory in film subtitle translation can greatly improve its translation quality, and the equivalence of field, tenor, and mode is also crucial for the translation of film subtitles.

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