

A Study on Pragmatic Errors and Countermeasures in Subtitling Translation of European and American Online Dramas

Wenwen Chen

School of Foreign Languages, Quanzhou Normal University, Quanzhou, 362000, China

Keywords: Pragmatic failure; Subtitle translation; strategy

Abstract: In the context of globalization, cultural exchanges between countries around the world are becoming increasingly frequent. Film and television works, as important carriers of cultural exchange, have gradually become popular cultural works among domestic audiences in many European and American online dramas. However, due to cultural differences between China and foreign countries, pragmatic errors are prone to occur in the subtitle translation process of European and American online dramas. This article analyzes this situation. Combining functional equivalence theory and other translation theories, this paper explores strategies to reduce pragmatic errors in subtitle translation of European and American online dramas.

1. Introduction

In the context of economic globalization, more and more European and American dramas are entering Chinese video websites, providing more opportunities for domestic students and audiences of other video websites to learn English. Online European and American online dramas are important media for the domestic public to understand the cultural and folk customs of European and American countries. At the same time, many European and American online dramas have attracted many viewers due to their humorous plot and excellent special effects production. Domestic audiences need to use Chinese subtitles to understand the plot while watching European and American online dramas, which puts higher demands on subtitle translation of European and American online dramas. However, due to cultural differences between China and foreign countries, the dialogue language in many European and American online dramas involves different cultures and customs. Some subtitle groups are prone to pragmatic errors in translating these contents, which may directly affect the audience's appreciation of the entire drama. Therefore, it is necessary for the subtitle teams of European and American online dramas to fully understand the cultural differences between China and foreign countries during the translation process, combine functional pairs and other theories to improve translation skills, reduce pragmatic errors, and improve the viewing effect of domestic audiences.

2. Common Pragmatic Errors in Subtitle Translation of European and American Online Dramas

2.1 Pragmatic errors in vocabulary

Vocabulary is the foundation of sentence formation, and the pragmatic language failure of vocabulary is also the most common type of pragmatic failure in subtitle translation of European and American online dramas. This type of pragmatic failure will directly affect the understanding of dialogue and plot of European and American online dramas by domestic audiences. Some subtitle groups are easily influenced by the side transfer effect of Chinese in the process of translating European and American online dramas. Simply corresponding the meaning of English subtitles to the literal meaning of Chinese, the translated subtitles are too straightforward and even somewhat awkward.

Taking the subtitle translation of the classic American TV series *Gossip Girl* as an example, this drama mainly tells about the life of Fuerdai of the upper class in Manhattan, and the heroine is the

most mysterious role among them, with many additional daughters who can provide him with information. There are many versions of this classic beauty sentence translated by subtitle groups, but due to the mobility of members in this subtitle group and the differences in translator level and translation perspective, the process of translating letters in this classic European and American online drama is also prone to pragmatic language errors in vocabulary. As Nate said in the second episode of the third season of *Gossip Girl*, "I am good at secret relationships." It was translated by some subtitle groups as "Wo hen shanchang mimi lianqing ". This translation method is directly based on the literal meaning. In fact, in China, things that cannot be publicly disclosed are usually added with the word "Dixia", such as "Dixia gongzuo " so the free translation of this subtitle as "Dixia lianqing " is more appropriate.

2.2 Pragmatic errors at the syntactic level

Pragmatic errors at the syntactic level are also common in the subtitle translation of European and American online dramas, mainly because translators habitually transfer Chinese or more proficient foreign language knowledge to English during the process of translating European and American online drama subtitles. Some translators are also susceptible to the influence of English acquisition level and knowledge during the subtitle translation process, such as blindly expanding the scope of certain English Chinese translation rules.

Taking the American drama "The Vase Wife" as an example, the female lead Kate of this drama is not stingy in showcasing her charm and sexiness in the night scene. However, after meeting Pete, she has undergone a change. As Pete's third wife, she needs to learn the role of a good wife and stepmother. At the beginning of the fourth episode of the drama, Peter said to Kate, "You sat through 'Lincoln', 'Lincoln Layer', 'Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter'. In return, I of you 'Magic Mike'. Kate replied, 'Nice, my very own Channing Tatum'. Combining the context of this film and television series, it can be seen that Pitt listed the movies that his wife Kate couldn't resist watching with her. Kate didn't really like these movies, so this process was also quite a tortuous one for Kate. However, in some subtitle group translations, there is a clear error in the combination of predicate and object, which is not in line with Chinese expression habits. Domestic audiences may encounter awkward situations when watching this plot. This requires combining Chinese language expression habits in translation, so that the audience can intuitively and clearly understand the dialogue and plot in online dramas.

2.3 Sociopragmatic failure

This linguistic error is relatively rare in the process of translating online drama subtitles compared to the first two. The main reason is that translators neglect the cultural differences between China and foreign countries in the process of translating online drama subtitles, and use inappropriate language forms in social and other scenarios, resulting in social linguistic errors. For example, the sentence "Lady Sansa, I offer my services once again again." which Breny said in the first episode of Season 6 of the online American TV series *Game of Thrones* was translated as: "Shansha furen, wo jiang zaici xiangnin xuanshi xiaozhong ". This translation may seem to have no problem, but based on the plot, Shansha was once forced to get married twice, and she was very unwilling to admit to these two marriages. Therefore, the translation is easy to misunderstand the audience. In fact, it is more reasonable to translate as "shansha xiaojie ", which is a typical social pragmatic error.

3. Strategies to reduce pragmatic errors in subtitle translation of European and American online dramas

3.1 Improving the Cultural Cultivation of Translators

European and American online dramas are carriers of cultural dissemination, and many dialogues in the dramas incorporate the historical, cultural, and folk customs of European and American countries. Without understanding these historical, cultural, and folk customs, it is easy to

encounter various problems during translation, which further increases the difficulty for translators to translate subtitles of European and American online dramas. To solve various problems such as lexical and pragmatic errors in subtitle translation, translators need to continuously improve their cultural literacy, strengthen their learning of the history and culture of European and American countries, and be able to skillfully translate the essence of the source language based on the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures and translation theories. At the same time, it is also necessary to ensure that the translated content conforms to the language habits of Chinese audiences. From a practical point of view, most of the translators of subtitles of European and American online dramas are Freelancer or students at school. There are obvious differences in their translation styles, ideas and methods. However, many translation teams can hardly consider the quality and effectiveness of translation in order to pursue translation speed. Therefore, many pragmatic failures are also likely to occur in the subtitle translation of European and American online dramas, which requires these translators to have a strong sense of responsibility, In the subtitle translation of European and American online dramas, it is necessary to strengthen the consideration of translation quality.

Firstly, translators should continuously improve their bilingual proficiency and reserve cultural knowledge. European and American online dramas involve the language and culture, historical culture, and folk culture of many European and American countries. It is necessary for translators to combine different contexts and cultural differences between China and foreign countries in the process of subtitle translation, and choose appropriate wording and sentence structures to accurately express the meaning of English subtitles in Chinese. Therefore, translators should consciously use their spare time to continuously enrich their knowledge of English language and historical culture by watching other excellent English Chinese translated literary works or film and television works, and continuously improve their bilingual application ability through real translation cases and simulation training.

Secondly, translators should strengthen their learning of the translation theory of functional equivalence, enhance their patience and creative awareness, and continuously improve their cultural cultivation and professional level. Translators have solid translation theory and cultural cultivation, which can help them creatively transform the subtitles of European and American online dramas without fundamentally changing the meaning of English subtitles, making Chinese translations more vivid and interesting, and more in line with the language habits and thinking habits of domestic audiences. Therefore, translators, especially foreign language majors who intend to work in the subtitle groups of online dramas in Europe and America, should make use of their spare time to strengthen their learning of translation theories such as functional equivalence. In the process of employment, they should also actively learn and share knowledge of Chinese and English language and culture as well as translation skills with other translators. In the process of selecting translators, subtitle teams engaged in subtitle translation of European and American online dramas should also strengthen their understanding of bilingual pragmatic abilities and cultural knowledge of both Chinese and foreign cultures, and select excellent personnel as translators for translation.

3.2 Adhere to the principle of functional equivalence

Nida's theory of functional equivalence has had a profound impact on the current translation community, requiring translators to pursue the closest natural equivalence in translation practice. Foreign scholars believe that under the theory of functional equivalence, the evaluation of translation effectiveness should not be limited to the equivalence of basic language knowledge or forms such as vocabulary and grammar, but should be based on the response of the target audience. In this perspective, in order for the translator to achieve ideal translation results, it is necessary to generate a similar understanding and response from the audience as the source language audience, and to ensure that the translation can be understood by the target audience.

Taking the subtitle translation of *2 Broke Girls* as an example, this European and American online play involves many slang words, such as students: "Hey there, milf?", Max replied: "shut up, toolbox, It refers to the person in the drama who has low social value and no resistance, but it also

means that the person is more foolish, which is somewhat different from the meaning of the original subtitles in the drama. Translating this word into a fool is more in line with the expression habits of Chinese, and the meaning of Chinese is also consistent with the scene meaning of the original subtitle in the sentence, which is very in line with the requirements of functional equivalence theory. Meanwhile, the term 'Milf' in this conversation does not have an accurate definition in standard dictionaries, while in some website explanations, it refers to a separated or divorced mother who wants to have sexual relations with the other party. It is a slang term used by young men and belongs to a relatively vulgar vocabulary, which requires translators to have a high level of translation proficiency and cultural cultivation. Combining the plot and character settings before and after this passage, it is more appropriate to translate it as "lama", which can better fit the original meaning of this slang and the dialogue scene. It can also convert vulgar language into Chinese that is more easily accepted by domestic audiences, making the entire translation colloquial. This translation based on the principle of functional equivalence can achieve better results, It can also effectively reduce the situation of translators making up vocabulary and other pragmatic errors at will.

4. Conclusion

In the letter translation of European and American online dramas, it is necessary to pay attention to their fleeting and holistic characteristics, which requires efficient communication between the film information and the audience. However, in actual letter translation, vocabulary, sentence structure, and social language pragmatic errors are common pragmatic errors in subtitle translation of European and American online dramas. In order to reduce communication and learning, subtitle groups and translators need to strengthen communication and learning, continuously improve translators' cultural cultivation and professional level, and also adhere to the principle of functional equivalence to improve the accuracy of subtitle translation during the translation process.

References

- [1] Liu Chunling. A Study on Entertainment Rewriting of Film Subtitle Translation: Taking "Mad Animal City" as an Example [J]. *Journal of Chifeng University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2019,40 (12): 103-105.
- [2] Yan Xiao. Translation of the Russian film "He is a Dragon" under the guidance of the theory of functional equivalence of translation -- from whispering simultaneous interpreting to subtitle translation [J]. *Sino Foreign Exchange*, 2018 (18): 68-69.
- [3] Liu Qiong. Translation of Film and Television Subtitles from the Perspective of Hermeneutics: A Case Study of the Subtitle Translation of the American TV drama "The Snake and Scorpion Maid" [J]. *Northern Literature (Mid Tencent)*, 2017 (7): 289-290.
- [4] Wang Lulu, Liu Shaolong. A Corpus Based Study on the Translator Style of Audiovisual Subtitle Translation: Taking the Two Chinese Translation Subtitles of the First Season of the American TV Series "Big and Small Lies" as an Example [J]. *Yiyuan Xintan*, 2022, 3 (1): 25-37.
- [5] He He. Breaking the Barrier: A Study of Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in Subtitle Translation of Film and Television Works - Taking "The Great Gatsby" as an Example [J]. *Modern Linguistics*, 2022, 10 (8): 1694-1701.
- [6] Chen Yupeng. The Translation of Humorous Lines in Film and Television Subtitles from the Perspective of Relevance Theory: A Case Study of the American TV drama "First Come" [J]. *Modern Linguistics*, 2022, 10 (10): 2118-2123.
- [7] Lu Xinyi, Ai Geping. Translation of English cartoon subtitles from the perspective of Piaget's cognitive Development theory -- Taking the Chinese translation of Peppa Pig as an example [J]. *English Square (later issue)*, 2022 (11): 11-14.

[8] Li Jiaxia, Zhang Tian. Under the Guidance of Schema Theory, Solving the Difficulties and Complications of Subtitle Translation: Taking the Subtitle Translation of "Sex and the City" as an Example [J]. English Square, 2023 (4): 13-16.

[9] Zheng Zhibao, Zhan Hong, Jiang Qi, et al. The Principles and Strategies of Film and Television Subtitle Translation from the Perspective of Functional Translation Theory: Taking "Truman's World" as an Example [J]. English Square, 2023 (5): 16-19.

[10] Wang Lu. From the perspective of German functionalist translation theory, the entertainment tendency of subtitle translation in film and television dramas: Taking the subtitle translation of "The Big Bang of Life" as an example [J]. Youth, 2016 (17): 116-117,15.