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English-Chinese Film Translation in China

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Abstract

Film translation in China has developed quickly. This article discusses the origin and nature of film, the features of film language, and the two main forms of film translation in China: dubbing and subtitling. The article then gives an overview of the history of film translation, and finally it investigates the main techniques used in English-Chinese dubbing and subtitling.

1. Introduction

Film translation, also known as screen translation, audio-visual translation, or multimedia translation, began in China as early as 1949, and played an important part in different historical periods. At present, hundreds of films in English are imported into China and most of them are subtitled. This article reviews film translation in China and gives a brief analysis of the main techniques used in English-Chinese film translation.

This article studies mainly the English-Chinese translation of full-length feature films and teleplays, whether they are shown in the cinema, on television, through video, or on the Internet. Since the translation of teleplays is very similar to that of films, in this article the term "film translation" includes the translation of teleplays. Documentaries and news programs are not included. What is discussed here is the translation of scripts, rather than film titles and teleplay titles.

2. Film and Film Translation

2.1. The origin and nature of film

The Lumière brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière, are credited with the world's first public film screening on December 28, 1895. They showed approximately ten short films in the basement lounge of the Grand Cafe on the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris. The showing lasted only twenty minutes in total, but was the very first public demonstration of the device they called "Cinematograph," which effectively functioned as camera, projector and printer all in one. Their work consisted mainly of moving images using scenes of everyday life. Interestingly, the Lumière Brothers were quite pessimistic about the prospects of the new invention at that time. Louis Lumière once said, "the cinema is an invention without a future." He suspected that people would become bored with images that they could just as easily see by walking out into the street.

Clearly, that prediction turned out to be wrong. Film, also known as cinema, movie or motion picture, has grown from a scientific novelty to a great industry and a powerful art form.

2.2. Features of film language

In a broad sense, film language means the way in which the director in a certain film communicates with the audience. It is comprised of many parts: scenes, written words, recorded speech, recorded music, recorded sounds and sound effects, etc. In a narrow sense, film language just means the dialogues in a film, or the lines spoken by actors. In this article, the phrase "film language" is used in its narrow sense.

As a dynamic art, film is an integration of sounds, pictures and words. Among the features of film language, colloquialism is the most distinctive one. Unlike formal, well-knit written language, film language is spontaneous, concise and vivid, easily understood. It is full of incomplete sentences, and sometimes even errors. Screenwriters make every effort to have the language sound "natural" and as "real" as everyday

language sounds to the audience instead of continually alerting the audience to the fact that "you are watching a movie."

Film language is irreversible on the screen. As a visual and aural art form, film can intensify the meanings of language by contrasting words with images. Film is an art of performance. In a well made movie, to reveal the personalities and inner emotions of certain roles, experienced actors will use accent, stress, tone, and timing to make the language more lifelike under the guidance of the director.

2.3. Classification of film translation

Karamitroglou classifies film translation in four categories: subtitling, lip-sync dubbing, narration (including voiceover), and free-commentary. The last three categories make up a broader category—re-voicing (Karamitroglou 2000:4). In China, film translation is usually classified as subtitling and dubbing, according to the way language exists in the translated films.

Subtitling is "the process of providing synchronized captions for film and television dialogue" (Shuttleworth et al 1997:161). In terms of the linguistic medium, subtitles can be categorized into intra-lingual subtitles and inter-lingual subtitles. The term "intra-lingual subtitles," also called "vertical subtitles," refers to subtitles which are the written text of what is being spoken—in the same language as what is being spoken by the actor or interlocuter. For example, a Chinese film would be shown with Chinese intra-lingual subtitles. "Inter-lingual subtitles," also called "diagonal subtitles," are two-dimensional, from source-language (SL) speech to receptor language (RL), and from oral medium to written. Since this paper discusses film translation, subtitling will refer to the latter.

The word "dubbing" has two meanings. In the broad sense, it is used to describe the replacement of one sound track (music, sound effects, dialogue, natural sound, etc.) by another. It is a post-production activity which allows considerable flexibility in "editing" the audio component of the visual. In the narrow sense, it means "dubbing translation" or "lip-sync translation" which, as a specific re-voicing technique, attempts to entirely cover the spoken source text with a receptor language text adjusted to match the visible lip movements of the original utterances (Dries 1995:9–10). In this article, the word dubbing is used in the narrow sense, as a means of film translation.

2.4. Differences between dubbing and subtitling

Essentially, dubbing relates to the acoustic medium as it involves the replacement of source acoustic verbal signals, while subtitling relates to the visual medium, retaining the source acoustic verbal signals but adding receptor language visual verbal signals as well. With the audience hearing only the RL dialogue, dubbing lends itself readily to manipulation for political purposes, and so it can be seen as a "covert" mode of translation. Additionally, in dubbing, lip synchronization may not perfectly match the movements of the mouth, and the voiceover may disagree with non-verbal cues and mannerisms on screen. From a positive perspective there is no change of medium in dubbing and, ideally, the audience is completely unaware of the foreign language.

In contrast, subtitling changes the medium with a written RL version of the dialogue appearing on the screen. It is seen as overt translation, laying itself bare to criticism from everyone with the slightest knowledge of the SL. Although there is no lip-synchronization, there must be some agreement between the subtitles, the written form of the spoken SL dialogue, and the corresponding image (Baker 1998:245). The main problem in this type of translation is caused by the difference between the speed of the spoken language and the speed in reading. A complete transcription of the film dialogue is not possible, for both the physical limitation of space on the screen and the pace of the spoken word require a reduction of the text. The experience for viewers who see a subtitled foreign film is considerably different from those who see the original film. Viewers are required to do a lot of extra work by reading subtitles while still absorbing all the other visual and oral cues of the film.

The typical "reader" of a dubbed film is a person who is presumably not able to appreciate the range of expression of an actor's voice. The typical "reader" of a subtitled film has a cognitive load superior to his

counterpart viewer of the same film that is dubbed. In summary, a dubbed film demands less intense cognitive effort on the part of the viewer as compared to reading a subtitled film.

2.5. Social preference for dubbing and subtitling

When a foreign film is introduced to a culture in which the language of the source film is unknown to most people, the distributor has two techniques at his disposal: dubbing and subtitling.

In such countries as Italy, Germany, Spain and France, the tradition of dubbing prevails, while subtitling is the dominant form of translation in Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Israel, Netherlands, Switzerland, Scandinavian countries, and Slavic countries. As Luyken reports (1991:31–32), Great Britain and Ireland favor neither subtitling nor dubbing. Instead, they use these language transfer mechanisms as needed and in a mixed manner. In the United States, only a small number of films are imported each year and they are usually subtitled.

What determines the choice of dubbing or subtitling as the main method of film translation in a country is a complex array of factors. These factors include cost, time, film genre, standard of literacy, interest in foreign languages, degree of cultural openness, and receptor audience profile (e.g., age, sex, educational background, social class). Generally speaking, the closer the link between the linguistic content and the character of a given movie, the more likely subtitled versions will be favored. If the receptor viewer group for the movie includes the under fifty year olds, the better educated and more affluent, as well as students and other intellectual minorities, the hard-of-hearing, and those with an interest in the original language of production, then subtitled versions are particularly likely to be popular and successful among them. For small markets (small language area or films for a select audience) subtitling is more suitable because it is cheaper.

Dubbing is a good choice for children's movies like Disney cartoons, since the audience cannot yet read, or read very well. Sometimes dubbing is favored for political reasons as a way of nationalizing an imported film and at the same time somehow minimizing its foreign, possibly subversive, influence. This is accomplished by completely concealing the original dialogue, since the host country system is perceived as the embodiment of a deeply rooted and superior tradition. For example, the development of the European sound film industry in the 1930s coincided in many countries with a growth in nationalism, and film dubbing in particular offered an ideal opportunity to adapt original screenplays to suit the prevailing political philosophy of specific European countries at the time.

As to translating foreign films into Chinese, China went through hardships in the early period of its development, an indisputable dominance of dubbing in the early 1980s, and a co-existence and competition of dubbing and subtitling at present.

3. Development of Film Translation

3.1. Development of film translation in the world

When films were first invented, they were silent. "In order to make the films easier to comprehend, some inter-titles (subtitles of the same language) were inserted between the frames. This kind of translation is actually the earliest subtitle translation practice. In the era of silent films the inter-titles were replaced for audiences in their own languages, and so they obviously imagined the actors communicating in the same languages" (Whitman-Linsen 1992:12).

With the advent of phonofilm or sound film, inter-titles began to disappear and the original characters' sounds were recorded. In 1927, Warner Brothers produced The Jazz Singer. It is a musical, starring Al Jolson, which mainly focused on the performance of the jazz singer. It had accompanying audio that consisted of a few songs by A1 Jolson and a few lines of dialogue. This film marked the end of "the age of silent film."

However, with the invention of sound films, the problem of translation emerged. In about 1932–33, American film companies tried to solve the translation problem by producing multiple-language versions of the same film. Huge studios were built for this purpose in Joinville, France. The original film was re-shot,

scene by scene, with a new cast of foreign actors, so that films could be shown in different countries. This system soon proved to be costly, inefficient, and artistically poor, and was quickly abandoned. The Joinville Studios were then turned into a dubbing facility. Since then, films have had to be either dubbed or subtitled to be distributed worldwide. Many Western film production companies set up film dubbing bases in some foreign countries to make their films understood and accepted by foreign audiences, to expand their overseas market, and to make greater profits. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) once established its film-dubbing base in France and Rome where local translators were employed to finish the dubbing process. Today, Italy, Germany, Russia, Japan, South Korea, China, and many other countries have built up their own film dubbing institutions.

3.2. Development of film translation in China

At the beginning of the 20th century, even before China developed a film industry of its own, a large number of movies from Europe and America had overwhelmed its market. Dubbing wasn't needed at that time as the films were all silent, but translation was still necessary to enable the audience to understand the film plot. When a foreign film was shown, the Chinese audience could read a synopsis of the story distributed by the cinema. Then there emerged a kind of live interpretation of the film, with a film commentator standing beside the screen and explaining what the film was about.

In 1922, the Shanghai Peacock Film Company pioneered making foreign films shown with Chinese subtitles. The audience could read the subtitles presented in slides to learn the content of the foreign film being shown. This turned out to be a great success, and many other film companies began to follow suit. In 1939, a piece of equipment called the "Earphone" was introduced from America by the Grand Guangming Theatre. When a foreign film was shown the viewers, without knowledge of the SL, could put on the earphones to listen to the Chinese explanation of the foreign film story and the Chinese version of the dialogues. The audience called the girls who did this job "Miss Earphone," as they usually had a very gentle female voice. However, not everybody had easy access to earphones at that time because only a small number of cinemas were equipped with them, and the audience had to pay more to use this kind of equipment. So the way for most people to understand foreign films was still through subtitles.

On January 8, 1948, the Italian film *An Unforgettable Dance*, was translated and dubbed by a group of overseas Chinese led by Wang Wentao. The film was first shown at the Grand Shanghai Theatre (called the Grand Shanghai Cinema today). From then on, a new type of film in which foreign film stars spoke Chinese came into being. But this film cannot yet be regarded as the first dubbed film in China in the real sense, since all the people in the production team were overseas Chinese. Therefore, it can be said that before 1949, China had no dubbed films of her own. The Changchun Film Studio, known as "the cradle of New China's films," translated and dubbed a film from the former Soviet Union, *An Ordinary Soldier*. Released in May, 1949, it was the first dubbed film in China in the real sense. From then on, over one thousand films have been translated and dubbed by Changchun Film Studio and Shanghai Film Dubbing Studio. At first, most of the foreign films dubbed were from the USSR and Eastern European countries. Later, Italian and Indian films were added to the list. Since 1956, some progressive films from Western countries and some films adapted from world classics were included in the dubbing list.

Dubbed films in China enjoyed a golden era in the 1980s. They opened a window for the Chinese people to learn more of the outside world, and promoted communication with people from other countries. At this time most imported foreign movies were dubbed because the number of people who understood foreign languages was small and most people in China were illiterate.

Now, half a century later, great changes have taken place in China. The rate of literacy has greatly increased, and a large percentage of Chinese people are well-educated. Since 1978, when China adopted the policy of reform and opening to the outside world, great importance has been attached to the study of foreign languages. With the rapid development of technology, people have easy access to foreign films, whether through DVD, VCD or on the Internet. Since the beginning of the 1990s, subtitled films have become more and more popular among young people, especially college students and well-educated people.

4. Current Studies on Film Translation

Film translation began just a few decades ago, yet the involvement and engagement of it have become wide enough to be viewed from a global perspective. The movie- and teleplay-making industry is unquestionably better developed in the Western world, especially in Europe and the United States. Academic studies in this area are mature in the West. The amount of movie translation is huge in Europe, and European scholars have done a lot of research in this field. Many institutes for the study of film translation have been established, such as, the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation, the European Institute for the Media and Independent Television Commission, and the French Association for Film Translation. These institutes organize conferences dedicated to film translation studies and lay down their own guidelines for this field. Some problems they face are methodological considerations, quality control and assessment, linguistic problems in film translation, technical constraints in film translation, and cultural factors in film translation.

Although film translation in China began as early as 1949 and played an important part in different historical periods, the study of film translation did not received due attention in the field of translation for quite a long time. The attention given to film-translation lagged far behind attention shown to the translation of written literary works. As a result, university courses usually do not include film translation.

In recent years in China, film translation has become a branch of study tending toward the practical. Many Chinese scholars and film translators have expressed their own viewpoints on film translation. Articles written by scholars include translation techniques, principles applied to film translation, analyses of the characteristics of film translation, and constraints on film translation.

5. English-Chinese Subtitling Translation

5.1. Features of subtitling

Subtitling of dialogues is an inter-semiotic communication because it transfers to the written medium, information which in most cases corresponds to oral communication and is, therefore, a multiple medium of communication.

"With subtitling, the audience is actually reading one's native language while listening to the original language" (Gottlieb 1992:165). Viewers' attention is inevitably divided between the subtitles at the bottom of the screen and the image. This constant diversion of focus may result in loss of information. Since people generally speak much faster than they read, it is necessary to reduce the original message in subtitling. The overriding goal of good subtitles must be their simplicity, clarity, and adequacy. Appropriate subtitles must appear synchronous with pictures.

Subtitles may also address different audiences compared to other forms of translation. There will be multi-lingual viewers who do not need translation, and at the other extreme, there will be some with no understanding of the SL at all. In between there will be viewers who need some help to follow the oral narrative. For them, the subtitles serve as a guide that is available when needed.

5.2. Technical constraints in subtitling

5.2.1 Space limitations:

No matter how big the size of the movie or television screen, subtitles usually occupy the space of two lines at the lower part. As Karamitoglou (1998:1–14) explains, this area of subtitles is usually occupied by image action which is of lesser importance to the general aesthetic appreciation of the movie. Subtitled text should be centered on its allocated lines for the convenience of viewing. However, in the case of speaker change, reflected in the text by dashes and presented simultaneously on a two-line subtitle, the subtitle lines should be aligned to the left side of the screen.

The number of words in one subtitle line varies according to the language due to the differences in graphic system and syntactic structure. It is usually the case that English utterance length is longer than the equivalent in Chinese. In addition, English subtitles occupy more space than do Chinese, due to their differences in

graphic system and syntactic structure. Generally speaking, for English, "each subtitle line should allow around 35 characters in order to be able to accommodate a satisfactory portion of the (translated) spoken text and minimize the need for original text reduction and omissions" (Karamitoglou 1998:1–14).

As for Chinese subtitles, according to Professor Ou Jianlong (1991:335–346), double lines in Chinese are not feasible, and there should be only one line each time. The number of Chinese characters per line should not exceed thirteen. The display of more characters reduces the legibility of the subtitles with the reduced font size. Nevertheless, in reality, some subtitles exceed thirteen Chinese characters, and two-line Chinese subtitles also occur occasionally.

5.2.2 Time limitations

The time of presentation of subtitles is dictated by (a) the duration of the utterance in the original film, (b) the reading speed of the viewers, (c) the visual information given on the screen, which also needs to be perceived clearly by the viewer, and (d) the editing style adopted in the film (Guardini 1998:91–112).

The reading speed of the average viewer for a text of average complexity has been proven to range from 150–180 words per minute. Therefore, a full two-line subtitle containing 14–16 words should remain on the screen for about 5 1/2 seconds. In practice, however, this duration should be expanded to approximately 6 seconds, considering that "our brain needs about 1/4–1/2 of a second to start processing the subtitles it has traced" (Karamitroglou 1998:1–14). For a full single-line subtitle of 7–8 words, the duration would be about 3 1/2 seconds; and for a single-word subtitle, however simple the word is, the minimum duration should be 1 1/2 seconds.

Subtitles should be on the screen long enough for ordinary viewers to catch the meaning, as too short a duration would render the subtitle as a mere flash on the screen, irritating the viewers' eyes. On the other hand, subtitles should not stay too long on the screen since too long a duration time would cause the automatic rereading of the subtitles, especially by faster readers.

As for the lead-in time, Karamitroglou proposes that "subtitles should not be inserted simultaneously with the initiations of the utterance but 1/4 second later, since tests have indicated that the brain needs 1/4 of a second to process the advent of spoken linguistic material and guide the eye towards the bottom of the screen anticipating the subtitle" (1998:1–14). However, the leading-in time cannot be longer than 1/2 of a second or the viewers will be waiting for the subtitle and will doubt whether the subtitle they see matches what they have already heard.

5.3. Main techniques in subtitling

Standardization and simplification are two important techniques applied to subtitling practice in China. One is concerned with the transfer of text mode—from spoken text to written text. The other is related to the technical constraints in subtitling, namely spatial and temporal constraints.

5.3.1 Standardization

Because of differences in linguistic features and cultural factors, preserving certain characteristics of spoken English becomes a challenging task. The most prominent feature of subtitling is the change of mode, from a spoken dialogue to a written text. In reproducing the original spoken English in the Chinese subtitles on the screen, the translators often use standard Chinese to replace substandard varieties of English in the original film dialogues. This means that the phonetic, lexical and syntactic features of substandard varieties are lost in the translation. These features of substandard or non standard English in some films contribute considerably to their stylistic features. Their absence in the Chinese subtitles very often deprives the films of the appeal of the dialogues.

The change from non standard English in live dialogues to written Chinese subtitles sweeps away the social dialectic features of the characters and leaves the impression that all the characters in the film speak with the same standardized accent. As a result, the original stylistic features of the film are partly lost.

Actually, the translation of non standard English into written Chinese is not a new problem. There have been attempts to translate into non standard or even incorrect Chinese (some Chinese versions of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, for instance), but the resulting translation was not well accepted.

(1) In the film *Donnie Brasco*, the marriage counselor says:

"Joe, what do you think you are running from?"

Qiáo, nǐ zài táobì shénme?

Joe: "I ain't running from nothin'."

Wǒ méi táobì shénme.

Maggie: "'I ain't running from nothin'.' Did you hear yourself? The man I married was a college man."

Nǐ zhīdào nǐ zài shuō shénme ma? Wǒ jià de nánrén shì shòuguò liánghǎo jiàoyù de.

This is the scene when Joe (Donnie Brasco) and Maggie go to a marriage counselor. Maggie is fed up with Joe's constant absence and hopes that a marriage counselor can help get him back on track. But Joe had become deeply involved with the mafia group for too long and nearly lost himself. Even his talking starts to resemble the mobsters. Sentences like, "I ain't running from nothin'," should not have come out of his mouth because he has been well educated and, as an FBI agent, lives an upper middle class life. However, this important distinction, suggested by stilted speech, is omitted in the Chinese version since the Chinese dialogue was translated as non-affected, standard speech.

5.3.2 Simplification

Subtitles must meet the requirements of space and speech duration. Indeed these constraints pose a great challenge for the subtitle translators, who have to translate the original dialogues within the predetermined spatial and temporal parameters, unlike translators of books, for example, who have more freedom in the choice of translation strategies. Therefore, in subtitling, the original message often needs to be simplified, which is another general technique of subtitling. The most common strategies used to simplify lines are condensation, reductive paraphrasing, and omission.

5.3.2.1 Condensation

In condensation the subtitle translators reduce the original dialogue by restructuring, omission of redundant information, etc.

(2) In *Training Day*, Alonzo says:

"I supervised five officers. That's five personalities, five sets of problems. You could be number six if you act right. But I ain't holding no hand, you understand? I ain't babysitting you."

Wǒ yǒu wǔgè shǒuxià, xìnggé nányuánběizhé. Nǐ biǎoxiàn dé hǎo jiùshì dìliùgè. Dàn wǒ bùhuì tèbié zhàogù nǐ.

In this example, Alonzo is introducing his experience in supervising officers of lower ranks, and in particular his style in treating subordinates. He speaks rather quickly in this scene, taking approximately eight to ten seconds. The Chinese subtitles are divided into two lines. For this short period of time, to present the whole message means to shorten the duration of each subtitle line. This may cause a problem for the understanding of the audience. Thus the subtitle translator condensed the Chinese subtitles into three short sentences. But along with the condensation, the characteristic style of Alonzo's speech is lost, and what's more important, so are the social dialectic features it displays.

5.3.2.2 Reductive paraphrasing

Subtitles should capture the core of a movie so as to give the viewers coherent transitions from one scene to another. Therefore, long and complicated sentences or reiterations have to be paraphrased to ensure adequate time to read the text.

(3) In *The Graduate*, Mr. Robinson says:

"What? You look to me like the kind of guy who has to fight them off. Doesn't he look to you like the kind of guy who has to fight them off?"

Zài wǒ kànlái, nǐ shì nàzhǒng gǎnyú jītuì zhǒngzhǒng zǔlán, qù zhēngqǔ suǒài de nánzǐhàn. Nǐ yěshì zhèyàng rènwéi de, shì bú shì?

Mrs. Robinson: "Yes, he does."

Shì de.

In the above example, Mr. Robinson reinforces his opinion of Ben by restating his observation in the form of a question to Mrs. Robinson. In translating, the subtitle translator summarizes the reiterated part and offers the viewers a coherent link. In this way, not only is adequate coherence ensured, but the viewers also find with minimal effort that Mr. Robinson's utterances to Ben and Mrs. Robinson are optimally related.

5.3.2.3 Omission

Time and space constraints challenge movie subtitle translators more often than not, and this usually leads to deletion of some messages. Movie dialogues are full of filler words or expressions which are of less importance or add no new information. Interjections, repetitions, hesitations, incomplete sentences, short answers, etc. are sometimes sacrificed so that time and space can be saved. The following example shows this point:

(4) In *The Graduate*, Mr. Robinson says:

"Is that Ben's car in front?"

Ménqián shì Běn de chē ma?

Ben: "Yes, sir! I drove…er…I drove Mrs. Robinson home. She wanted me to drive her home, so I drove her home."

Shìde, xiānshēng! Yìng Luóbīnxùn fūrén de yāoqiú, wǒ sòng tā huíjiā.

In this example, the hesitation and repetition are all left out due to the constraints of time and space. As a result, the suggestion that Ben is thinking while speaking, is lost.

6. English-Chinese Dubbing Translation

6.1. Features of dubbing

Actually, dubbing is a translating technique specifically aimed at hiding the fact that the dialogue is translated. To be more exact, the aim of inter-lingual dubbing is to deny the translated nature of the filmic text. It is designed to give the impression that the actors whom the audience sees in the film are actually speaking the receptor language.

Lip-sync dubbing demands more time, effort, and cost than any other form of film translation. Goris (1993:170) explains some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of dubbing. The disadvantages include the cost and time factors, the loss of authenticity when the original voices are replaced by those of a limited number of actors, and the impossibility of conveying authenticity given the visual reminders of the foreignness of the setting and characters. And dubbing deprives viewers of the opportunities of listening to the foreign language. Most important, the necessity of maintaining lip synchronization places heavy demands on the translator. It is extremely difficult to coordinate the multiple expectations and, as a result, many subtle extra-linguistic cues get lost.

On the positive side, less information is lost due to standardization, simplification, condensation, reduction, and omission, as compared to subtitling a film. Dubbing is more professionalized. For example, in many countries there are professional dubbing actors and directors, whereas one rarely hears of subtitling actors or directors. Dubbing draws on some of the established methods of post-synchronization—the dubbing and recording work done in the later stages of film production. Furthermore, dubbing constructs a more

homogeneous discourse as it is an oral translation of an oral source text, so that the viewer does not have to divide his or her attention between the images and the written translation (Goris 1993:171). Finally, it does not require a high level of literacy from its users, including both children and illiterate viewers, who are not excluded from the enjoyment of foreign film productions.

Dialogue should be clear enough so that actors' pronunciation of words does not arouse any misunderstandings. For instance, the personal pronouns "he," "she," and "it" have the same pronunciation in Chinese, so the translator must make sure that the audience understands to whom or to what the speaker is referring so as not to cause any misunderstandings (Qian Shaochang 2000:61).

6.2. Technical constraints in dubbing

Like subtitling, dubbing, as an important form of film translation, also has some technical constraints that will influence the success of translation. Lip synchronization and the limit of time are the most distinguishing visual constraints in dubbing. A movie translator must modify the script to match it with the lip movements of the person seen on the screen. This is especially true when a speaker is shown close up. If the dubbing didn't match the actor's lip movements it would appear to be an obvious voice-over.

If the translated text is not synchronized with the actor's lip movements it would distract the audience and make them laugh should the actor's lips still be open while they can no longer hear the person's voice, or vice versa. So the translated version should match, as nearly as possible, the length of speech time as the original version. The translator has to calculate how many words or characters in the receptor language should be used for each sentence in order that a long English sentence not be replaced by a short Chinese sentence, and vice versa.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that, not only should the timed length of sentences be controlled, but the content of the text should be considered. It is important to find expressions that both effectively carry the meaning and closely match the actor's lip movements. Since there are enormous differences between Chinese and English, in some cases it is difficult to find RL words that match the SL lip movements perfectly. Therefore, there is always something lost in translation. This is why non-native viewers often fail to acquire the quintessence of a dubbed movie. In some cases, adding or omitting some non-content words which have little influence on literal meaning is needed to make the text synchronize with subtle cues in the original script.

In addition, synchronization is required between the dubbed voice and the visual image, so that the dubbed film can look as natural as the original. Extralinguistic features such as facial expressions, eye contact, stance, gestures, and paralinguistic features such as pitch and speed of speech, intonation, stress, pauses, and even hesitations should also be taken into account in dubbing. If the translation fails to match the visual image and dubbing voice, misinterpretation will occur.

6.3. Main techniques in dubbing

As has been discussed above, visual images are of first importance in a film. The audience's sense of sight is the first concern. In dubbing, the translator should make his translation fit the image and synchronize the dialogue with the image. Matching speech to lip synchronization, gestures, and pauses are the major constraints in dubbing.

6.3.1 Adjustment due to lip synchronization

Among the set of visual constraints, lip synchronization is the most distinguishing one. The main aim of dubbing is to make the character "speak" the RL as naturally as he does in the SL. The difficulty lies in the fact that not only should the relevant length be controlled, but the wording of the text should also be measured. The translated speech and the original speech should take the same length of time when being uttered. In some cases, by adding or omitting some non-content words, which have little importance to literal meaning, the translator can adjust the length of lines and make the dubbed speech synchronize with the original script.

(5) In the film, *Gone with the Wind*, when their talking of war bores Scarlett, the protagonists change the topic to the barbecue the Wilkes will give at Twelve Oaks the following day.

Stuart: "That's a good idea."

Version 1: *Hǎo zhǔyì.*

Version 2: *Nà dào búcuò.*

Version 1 gives the literal meaning but the translation appears too short for the original script. Version 2 extends the utterance time. It may change the original, literal meaning slightly, but functionally it is the same to the listeners. As a matter of fact, the revised rendering, which conforms to the length of the film dialogue, is more colloquial.

6.3.2 Adjustment due to gesture

Great importance should be attached to body language in dubbing. Problems may arise when translated words do not correspond closely with the character's gestures. When a character makes a gesture, translators should guarantee that what he or she says suits his or her body language. If not, certain adjustment should be made to the accompanying lines.

(6) In *Heartbeat*, Cooper says:

"I have been Wendy's family doctor since she was…this high."

Version 1: *Wǒ zài Wéndì zhèmegāo de shíhòu jiùshì tāde jiātíng yīshēng le.*

Version 2: *Wǒ kāishǐ zuò Wéndì jiātíng yīshēng shí tā cái…zhèmegāo.*

In the first episode of the TV series, *Heartbeat*, a girl named Wendy has breast cancer. The surgeon prefers a radical operation, but Wendy's family doctor suggests a minor operation for fear that a radical operation might affect her. When he explains this to the other doctor, he says: "I have been Wendy's family doctor since she was……this high." When he pauses, Cooper makes a gesture of putting his palm down to illustrate the height of Wendy when she was young. We can see that Version 2 is better than Version 1 in that Version 2 makes it easier for the dubbing actor to synchronize the language and image. Version 1 may even hinder the viewers' understanding (Qian Shaochang 2000:63).

6.3.3 Adjustment due to pause

Pausing, as a paralinguistic feature, may add special utterance meaning to sentences. In film dubbing, for the purpose of synchronization, the translator should make his translation pause at the same time—and sound as natural—as the original. At the same time he should try to keep the meaning of the original pauses.

(7) In *Gone with the Wind*, Scarlett says:

"Well...but remember I warned you."

Hǎoba…dànshì jìzhù, wǒ jǐnggào guò nǐmen.

Scarlett is bored by their talking of war, and threatens to leave, so they beg her to stay. Obviously, the pause between "well" and "but" is a logical pause to emphasize the sentence after "well." The Chinese rendering here also preserves the pause to match the original script and to show Scarlett's emphasis in her warning.

7. Summary and Conclusion

Thus far we have attempted an analysis of film translation development in China, the classification and social preference of film translation, and the main features and techniques in subtitling and dubbing in English-Chinese translation. It is clear that film translation is different than that of other literary forms. Therefore, research on it should be done not only with regards to linguistic aspects, but also in cultural, technical, and other domains.

Although subtitled films are very popular now, dubbed ones are still needed in China. At present, not everyone understands foreign languages, and some older people and children find it hard to follow the speed of the printed words on the screen. As for animated films, dubbing would be a good choice so that children can understand the dialogue better. So dubbing and subtitling will co-exist in China and compete fiercely with each other in the market for a long time.

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