

Autonomy and Selection: Exploration on the Translator's External Behavior in Audiovisual Translation of the Huai River Culture

Jiqun Fan^{1,a,*}, Ramsey Ferrer^{2,b}

¹Huainan Normal University, Huainan, Anhui, 232001, China

²Philippine State College of Aeronautics, Pasay City, The Philippines

^ageetry2023@gamil.com, ^bferrer.ramsey@gmail.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: As a local underprivileged Culture in China, the Huai River Culture has faced challenges and difficulties in its survival and international communication. In this process, the translator has played a decisive role, and his autonomy can directly influence the communication effect of the culture. As an emerging translation mode, audiovisual translation has rendered the text more dynamism and supplementary information, which in turn will require the translator's external behavior and effort beyond conventional perception of the translation act. In audiovisual translation of the Huai River Culture, the translator's role can extend beyond language transition and enjoy great autonomy in translation motivation, modality selection, theme selection, scenario selection, voice selection, and color selection. More attention to the translator's external behavior will facilitate the AVT effect of the Huai River Culture and thus propel its sustainable progress and better international communication.

Keywords: audiovisual translation; the Huai River Culture; translator's external behavior; autonomy and selection; international communication

1. Introduction

The accelerated upgrading of IT technology and internet interactions amid globalization has profoundly transformed people's communication modes. As an important channel of interlingual communication, translation has played a significant role in facilitating cultural exchange and assimilation. Like other communication modes, translation has also undergone tremendous changes in both structure and mentality. According to Gambier, modern translation studies have experienced two major paradigm shifts: one is from equivalence to cultural turn, and the other is from printing to digitalization^[1]. Audiovisual translation (AVT for short) emerged and thrived under such circumstances, contributing to new changes in the translator's role and reflections on nature and criteria for translation.

Cultural publicity worldwide is, by nature, a translation activity. Different from conventional text-to-text translation and face-to-face interpreting, it aims to attract the target reader and win over their interest by displaying the charm and dynamism of the culture. The response to updated communication technology and fast-changing reader demands is essential to the successful popularization of local cultures, especially those underprivileged ones like the Huai River Culture. In the process of AVT of the Huai River Culture, the translator must think and act beyond the conventional perception of the translator and his acts. Up until now, the research on local culture AVT has been quite limited and fewer researchers have cast their attention to AVT from the perspective of the translator's external behavior. Therefore, this study is expected to extend the research on AVT field and explore the translator's role and external behavior in local cultural audiovisual translation.

2. The Huai River Culture

Different from mainstream culture, subcultures are only accepted by a small number of people. In history, the Huai River Culture used to be powerful and influential. It originated from the Huai River which started at Tongbai Mountain in Henan Province and flowed across Henan, Hubei, Anhui, and Jiangsu provinces before joining the Yangtze River at Sanjiangying. Thanks to its broad expanse and ideal geographical location, the Huai River Valley became one of the major grain production areas and

earned its name as the middle of Huaxia (another ancient name for China). It covers east Henan province, South Shandong Province, North Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces, stretching along the dividing line between China's North and South areas. It boasts rich biological diversity and has nurtured great philosophical thoughts in Ancient China^[2]. In the past agricultural economy, the region played a crucial role and was regarded as a strategic pivot in military fights. Through historic changes, the Huai River culture mingled with other subcultures and gradually drew merits from Dongyi culture in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, Laoism and Taoism along the Huai River, Jingchu Culture in Hubei Province, Wuyue Culture in Zhejiang Province, Central Plain Culture in the Han Dynasties and the North Song Dynasty as well as Huaiyang Culture in Ming and Qing Dynasties. It found its roots in the Huai River Valley, evolved from Chu and Ming cultures, and interacted widely with Central Plain Culture, registering waterside agricultural features. As an evolutionary cultural complex, the Huai River Culture has earned rich connotations in its form, customs, and mentality and, has become very distinctive in its regional and humanistic uniqueness^[3].

However, with the arrival of the industrial revolution, the Huai River Culture, once popular in the agricultural economy, dwindled in both size and influence. Among various subcultures in China, the Huai River Culture is an underprivileged one, struggling amid globalization and urbanization and facing challenges brought by regional backwardness and population outflow. In an internet era, the active exposure of the Huai River Culture is relatively low and is comparatively weaker in terms of communication topic setting and modern interpretation of cultural elements. Consequently, the general public gradually lost its attention and interest in anecdotes, celebrities, farming culture, generation customs, and tribe culture in the Huai River Valley^[4].

3. Audiovisual Translation

Audiovisual translation (AVT for short) is a mode of translation characterized by the transfer of audiovisual texts either interlingually or intralingually^[5]. Besides concerning various symbols, AVT is also varied in its form. According to Gambier, AVT incorporates 12 types, like live subtitling, audio description, and audio subtitling in intralingual translation, as well as script/scenario translation, interlingual subtitling, dubbing, free commentary, voice-over, and surtitling in interlingual translation^[6]. Among all those types, voice-over, dubbing and subtitling are the most common types. Voiceover is between interpreting and commentary, mainly used for news coverage and live broadcasts. When voiceover functions, the original voice will be lowered so that the voiceover will not be interfered. Dubbing is also a common translation mode for audiovisual translation, which is largely used in TV series and documentaries. The most prominent challenge is that the lip movement of the interpreter must match the sound of the original language. The closeness and openness of the first and last syllables in the original language must also be heeded in dubbing. In some cases where multiple roles are involved, many interpreters might be required to achieve lip-synchronization. Besides, dubbing might not be a good choice when some viewers suffer dysaudia. Despite its rigidity and narrow application, dubbing is an irreplaceable way to convey the vitality of source language text to target language receivers. The specific translation mode will also vary according to the quality of the TL receivers. For instance, in foreign film translation TL receivers in bigger cities who are better educated in foreign languages can expect both dubbed films and films with subtitles and the original voice. However, when it comes to smaller cities, TL viewers can only watch dubbed films. Moreover, dubbing is often widely used in translation for minors, because young kids are not fully literate and might find difficulty understanding subtitles^[7]. Compared with voiceover and dubbing, subtitling is closer to conventional paper edition translation and thus becomes more flexible. It is the most commonly used type in today's AVT market. Thanks to its separation from the voice, the translation becomes more efficient in both time and budget. Thanks to the close integration between image, voice, and text, AVT has become one of the powerful means for the international publicity of local cultures. However, the current literature focusing on local cultural AVT is still far from sufficient.

4. Translator's Behavior

For a translator's behavior, there is no fixed term to describe the translator's behavior in the process of translation, and different scholars approach the act from different angles. Nord believes a translator's behavior is a series of acts by the translator for linguistic transition^[8], drawing people's attention to the purpose of the act. Professor Luo Xuanmin argued translation was an act not just linguistic but cultural and educational^[9], emphasizing the cultural factors in translation activity. Qian Chunhu, et al. defined

the translator's behavior as a series of regular acts made by the translator under the influence of both internal and external factors for linguistic transition ^[10], further expanding the focus on the translator's behavior to the external factors. More and more scholars began to regard translation as a crossing of boundaries between media, and between cultures within an international context ^[11]. When it comes to the analysis of the translator's behavior, researchers have to consider it intermedially and interculturality. As the research goes deeper, researchers started to focus on the further division of the translator's behavior. Chesterman elaborates on Toury's distinction between 'translation acts' (cognitive process) and 'translation events' (sociological process), and adds a third, superordinate level of 'translation practices' (cultural, historical, anthropological)^[12]. In recent years, research distinction between the internal translator's behavior and the external ones has become popular in China. According to Professor Zhou Lingshun, the translator's external behavior is mainly reflected as the social acts by the translator when engaged in social interactions with other parties in the translation activity ^[13]. It is closely connected to the translator's purpose, SL text selection, translator's quality and reader's awareness ^[14]. As a social participant, the translator will consciously and subconsciously sway his influence over the loyalty and quality of the translation version through his ideology, world outlook intention, aesthetic taste, and cultural background. Those effects can determine the text selection and reader group positioning of the translator ^[15]. Obviously, the findings on the translator's external behavior become various but the present study is mainly limited to realm of text-to-text. When cross-modality translation is involved, the research will certainly be even more interesting and inspiring.

5. Analysis on the Translator's External Behavior in the Huai River Culture AVT

5.1 Translation Motivation Selection

Motivation is defined as a set of internal and external motive forces that determine people to carry out activities, settle limits and forms of activity, and give orientation to this activity focused on the achievement of certain goals ^[16]. Motivation defies direct measurement. When it comes to translation motivation, some scholars categorize it as personal or social. The personal motivations include language skills improvement, translation skills improvement and professional experience acquisition, while the social ones incorporate organizational support and language and culture transmission. McDonough Dolmaya divided motivations into intrinsic and extrinsic ones. The former refers to information sharing and organizational support, while the latter pertains to career success, money earning, or product-related motives ^[17].

Besides, personal and social motivations are quite different, but neither of them can be ignored in the translation. Personal motivations can guarantee the sustainable progress of translators, while the social ones could secure the healthy development of regional cultural communication. Despite various forms of translation motivation, its impact on translation activity is obvious. It can be deemed as the starting point of the translator's behavior and lead to specific translator acts and, subsequently, the transmission effect. For the AVT publicity of the Huai River Culture, research on the translator's translation motivation really matters.

5.2 Theme Selection

Thanks to historical accumulation over thousands of years, the Huai River Culture has boasted a broad array of forms and subcategories, many of which are ideal for aural and visual presentation. For local dramas or operas alone, the Huai River Valley has nurtured and nourished over 16 regional operas ^[18]. Facing rich and various cultural forms, translators of the Huai River Culture enjoy great options in source language text selection. Since translators also fall into different categories, they have different considerations when it comes to what needs to be translated. For those who are entrusted with greater autonomy in audiovisual translation activity, their suggestions on theme selection have always played a crucial role. The selection on this condition has a lot to do with the translator's individual interest. For example, the translators with strong interests in music will be apt to choose local dramas, operas or ballads for translation, while those show strong preference to history and relics will choose antiques, earth ware or historic legends as their translation theme. Meanwhile, since cultural translation evolves in steps, wise translators will bear a sense of roadmap to achieve their translation goals. At the initial stage, the translation can start with the theme widely accepted worldwide like music, folklores and civil customs. When the reader group grows, the translation can go deeper into something unique in the local culture or themes that are more complex and ideologically different.

5.3 Modality Selection

Modality deals with the assessment of the intrinsic and extrinsic meanings of a statement in terms of control over a situation and judgement of its truth value^[19]. In the modern era, multi-modality translation has become a trend, presenting both challenges and opportunities for parties involved in translation activities. In cultural translation, especially audiovisual translation, multimodality has been a common phenomenon, which requires translators' autonomy and skills in cross-modality transition. On the other hand, translators engaged in cultural translation are mostly youngsters skilled and experienced in social networking. Compared with their predecessors, they are more proficient in information technology and cyber techniques. Cross-modality transmission will be their top choice when facing some translation challenges. For example, in cross-border E-commerce, due to small scale of the enterprises, the translators are often marketers at the same time responsible for translation, marketing, trade website operation and even after-sale services. To offer a better online purchase experience, they also need to take care of product photography and find background music to go with the marketing text of the products. Conventionally speaking, translator's roles in those cases are quite obscure and controversial; however, it is the mixed role of external translation behavior that makes multimodality translation interesting and worth research.

5.4 Scenario Selection

In audiovisual cultural translation, the scenario is an important element in presentation and communication. Pictures, images, figures and scene setting are complementary to language and plots. Like in filmmaking, in AVT, language or text often comes before scenarios; therefore, as the director knowing the film script best, translators understand the text better than anyone else. They are text producers in language translation and, if possible, also directors in video shooting. For example, in a promotional documentary of beef soup which is the feature snack of Huainan city, the translator suggested both the ancient soup-making scene and the modern workshop manufacturing scene should be added to the documentary to stress the long history and modern techniques of food production. Another example is an online video advertisement for Han Clothes. In the video shooting, the translator strongly advised the seller to hire some foreigners to try the garments, explaining that by doing so, the target consumers might feel more interested and desirable to buy. Those recommendations were not made solely from the perspective of language transition, but also out of cross-cultural communication. No one else can be more suitable than the translator to fulfill the task.

5.5 Voice Selection

As mentioned above, among the three commonest types of AVT, two are closely connected to the auidial operation of SL text. In such cases, the translator is expected to act as a reciter, reading out his own translation version for TL receivers. Sometimes the odds are great that the translator is not phonetically ideal for voiceover or dubbing. Therefore, the reciting work will be outsourced, and the translator, who is supposed to be the creator of the translation script, might have a say in selecting the ideal reciter for the project. The translator's manipulation of the selection of reciter can be manifested in the following two aspects: First, during the translation, the translator might have sketched out the features of reciting according to his understanding of the SL text, the translation project and the translation effect to be achieved. Second, when the translation is completed, the translator may have in his mind a complete picture of what kind of the reciter is required. The selection will be made in accordance with the timbre, intonation, tone quality, breath, rhythm, emotion, speech flow and pause required by the translation work. The selection is quite subjective, heavily depending on the feelings and understanding of the translator towards the text and the translation activity.

5.6 Color Selection

In audiovisual translation, images are important. When it comes to images, color is among the most important elements for meaning expression. At the central role of AVT, the translator also plays a manipulative role in making decisions on color selection. Although color consideration is seemingly beyond the translator's task, in AVT it is a central issue the translator has to face and think about. There are some cardinal principles for the translator's consideration. First, for most visual outputs, color selection is like theme setting. Due to cultural differences, that is often neglected by Chinese, who are more reserved and less straightforward. For example, in translating an enterprise PR video, the translator learned from the SL text that the corporate culture is represented by white and blue colors, indicating

purity and wisdom. Realizing that, the translator advised setting both two as theme colors in the video presentation to complement the text and audial information. Second, the color selection should be in line with the receivers' demand and taste to win over the attention and recognition from receivers. Once, the author worked as an interpreter for an Indian company engaged in business negotiations on fiber cables with local companies in Anhui Province. The presentation took yellow as the background color, because yellow is quite popular in India. However, the presentation and negation took place in a hotel conference. If the PPT background is in yellow, the projection effect will be somewhat unsatisfactory. The interpreter shared his concerns with Indian customers and persuaded them to change the background color into blue which is more acceptable in China and better for on-the-spot effect. Third, cross-cultural color difference can sometimes add spice to the promotional effect. What is different is enticing. In a tourism promotion video of the Huai River Valley, the western-style wedding scene was staged for a few seconds, though it was not the focus of the video. The translator recommended shooting a traditional Chinese wedding scene: wooden sedan chair, jet-black hair, red bridal veil, golden toy ingot and pink lotus flowers. Due to cultural differences, those colors created color shock arousing foreign audience to inquiring more about the local culture.

6. Conclusion

AVT is a good choice for the Huai River Culture to avail of modern communication ideas and technology for successful worldwide spread. It has made significant breakthroughs in the translation paradigm, and more than ever, offered great autonomy to the translator. Because of the autonomy, the translator's role in local cultural AVT has become more controversial than ever before. As the scope of translation studies has extended after a series of turns within a century, the concept of the translator's role and behavior should also be updated accordingly.

In the practical translation of audiovisual materials of the Huai River Culture, the translators' autonomy can be reflected at least in his selection on theme, motivation, modality, voice, scenario and color. The extended role and external behavior of the translator will definitely add vitality to the international communication of local underprivileged culture. Therefore, granted the fast track for its international publicity, the Huai River Culture can expect a bright future for its international communication.

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