

A study on the translation of Gannan Tea Picking Opera from the perspective of multimodal discourse

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Abstract: There are four hundred years of history of the national intangible cultural heritage Gannan tea-picking opera. Findings indicated that through the application study of the framework of multimodal theory to analyze the Gannan tea-picking opera translation *Inspecting the Farms* respectively from the cultural, contextual, content and expression level, a variety of symbols of Gannan tea-picking opera with language, singing, dance and other symbols could be combined cooperate together to construct the whole meaning of the context. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators should pay attention to multimodal information in the source text.

Keywords: Gannan tea-picking opera; translation of Chinese masterpieces; multimodal discourse analysis; *Inspecting the Farms*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gannan tea-picking opera has a history of 400 years. It was announced by the State Council as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage in May 2006. Nowadays, the Chinese government has a “going out” strategy, aiming to make the Chinese language, Chinese culture, and the Chinese media more visible internationally. However, Gannan tea-picking opera actually is a wonderful flower in the Chinese drama garden and yet corresponding attention has not been received greatly.

Gannan tea-picking opera is a comprehensive art, consisting of many elements such as language, music, dance, art, performance and so on. It is a multimodal and multi-symbol collection. In the process of translation, as to achieve the purpose of information transfer, both language and other types of symbols are involved in the construction of meaning. Even in the narrow sense of translation, in the process of converting from one language to another for types of original texts, translators should not only pay attention to the language information, but also the meaning of other symbols. Therefore, the translation activity itself contains the contents of multimodal information transmission (Zhu Ling, 2007).

Different from other literary genres, drama is characterized by its duality. It is both literary and theatrical. Because of its complexity, drama

translation is extremely difficult, so the study of drama translation is scarce. At present, the translation of drama is mainly based on the different uses of translations—text reading or stage performance. It is divided into desk drama translation and field drama translation. However there are few researches in Gannan tea-picking opera translation. According to the data from CNKI, domestic translation study of Gannan tea-picking opera has only one journal article. That is Lin Zhenghua and Xiong Linyan's (2012) *A Study on the Aesthetic Translation of Gannan tea-picking opera with the Purpose of Stage Performance*. None deals with the translation of Gannan tea-picking opera under the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gannan Tea-picking Opera

Gannan tea-picking opera is one of the traditional dramas in the south of Jiangxi province. It forms a play on the basis of local folk lanterns and tea-picking performance. Experts believe that Gannan tea-picking opera originated from Jiulong Mountain in Anyuan county. It has a history of more than 400 years and has a great relationship with the history of tea planting in southern Jiangxi. There were more than 100 traditional repertoires of Gannan tea-picking opera, but some of them have been lost. Now, only 90 traditional repertoires have been preserved. The performance contents of Gannan tea-picking opera are mainly consists of the daily life and also interpreted with all kinds of emotional disputes, performing a variety of life comedy. There are four features of Gannan tea-picking opera. First, “Two female role and one buffoon” as performance team. Second, The working people are the performing subjects. Third, the content of drama comes from life and reflects reality. Fourth, a humorous comedy style.

2.2 Previous Studies on Gannan Tea-picking Opera Translation and Multimodality at Abroad and Home

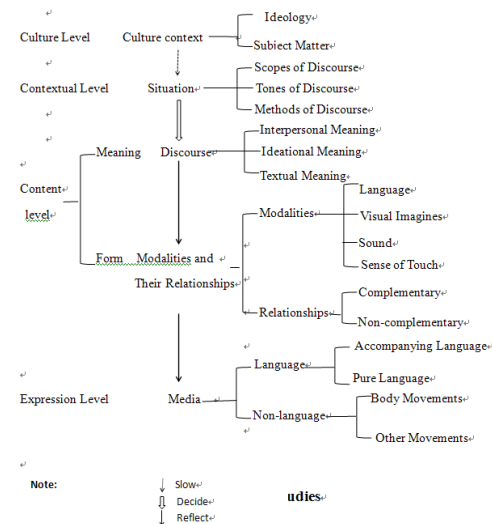
Multimodality (Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), like multiliteracies, has emerged in response to the changing social and semiotic landscape. Key to multimodal perspectives on literacy is the basic

assumption that meanings are made (as well as distributed, interpreted, and remade) through many representational and communicational resources, of which language is but one (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This and other aspects of multimodal theory are outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) *Multimodal Discourse*. Multimodality attends to meaning as it is made through the situated configurations across image, gesture, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech, and so on. From a multimodal perspective, image, action, and so forth are referred to as modes, as organized sets of semiotic resources for meaning making.

However, in China, multimodal discourse analysis was first seen in Li Zhanzi's article--*Social Semiotic Analysis of Multimodal discourse analysis*(2003) , which was the introduction of visual grammar constructed by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen in 1996. Later, Zhang Delu's *Exploration of the Multimodal Discourse Analysis*(2009) , Wei Qinhong's *Studies on Multimodality and Multimodal Discourse in Visual Surrounding* and so on were published. These are mainly introductions, explanations and reviews of foreign multimodal discourse analysis. There are also many papers that analyze and apply multimodal texts, converting a wide areas such as visual applications, corpus construction, teaching application and so on. However, from the qualitative point of view, domestic research is more about the simple application of theory and lacks critical and constructive research. Now, only Zhu Ling's *Exploring the Multimodal Perspective of Kunqu Opera Translation--Take The Peony Pavilion as an example*, is based on the theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis for the study of drama translation.

Systemic function linguistics is the most suitable theory to be applied in multimodal discourse analysis because it is not necessary to reform itself to meet with the new needs. Although multimodal discourse analysis seems to expand the scope of systemic functional linguistics, the latter could directly provide the theoretical framework for the former.

This article mainly use the theoretical framework of Zhang Delu(2009). According to this theoretical framework, the theory multimodal discourse analysis is mainly composed of five levels: cultural level, contextual level, meaning level, form level and media level. Meaning and form are collectively called content level.



4. A CASE STUDY ON THE INSPECTING THE FARMS

4.1 A Brief Introduction of the Inspecting the Farms

The play is the eighth of *the Peony Pavilion*. This play about the Nan'an prefecture Du Bao to encourage spring farming, farmers are warm welcome and praise. The paper mainly describes the preparatory work in the early stage of persuading farmers, and the warm welcome of the peasants to his coming. The communication between the peasants and prefecture is very pleasant. The play *Inspecting the Farms* assigns the political ideal of Tang Xianzu. Such a peaceful world of paradise, is Tang Xianzu poetic "Republic". However, his ideal society was not imagined out of thin air, but during his stay in Suichang County, he vigorously propagated farming, went to the countryside to propagate farming personally, and praised the practice of good agricultural harvest. It was later passed on to the world by writing the play. This play depicts the peasant women picking mulberry and picking flowers, and there appears a scene of government and people getting along with each other. After *the Peony Pavilion* came out, the Peony Pavilion became a folk drama that the audience loved to watch and listen to.

4.2 Analyses of the Gannan Tea-picking Opera Translation from the Perspective of Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The most suitable theoretical model of multimodal discourse is the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics(Zhang Delu, 2009) . According to this theoretical framework, the theory multimodal discourse analysis is mainly composed of five levels: cultural level, contextual level, meaning level, form level and media level. Meaning and form are collectively called content level. And then, we study *Inspecting the Farms* from the four aspects: cultural, contextual, content, media.

4.2.1 The Cultural Level

The cultural level is the key level to make

communication become possible (Zhang Delu, 2009). Gannan tea-picking opera belongs to local drama, which not only contains profound Chinese traditional culture, but also embodies Hakka culture. The translators play a mediating role in spreading culture. In the play of *Inspecting the Farms*, it is necessary to understand that *Inspecting the Farms* means that local officials go to the countryside in the spring to encourage peasants to engage in productive activities. But in most cases, this is merely a formalistic measure, often harassing farmers. But in *Inspecting the Farms*, prefect Du Bao's exhortation activities did not disturb the peasants' life, and the peasants were satisfied with what Du Bao had done. The translators using simple and clear language shows the audience the background.

This paragraph is a psychological activity of Du Bao before persuading peasants. The difficulty of translation is mainly the understanding of ancient poetry and the cultural image it conveys.

(Enter Du Bao, followed by his attendants and butler)

Du Bao:

(To the tune of *Ye you chao*)

Where shall I go inspecting the farms?

I'll gather poems of springtime charm.

The turtledove's song I hear,

Behind my carriage runs the deer.

Under trees I look far and near.

"The season, the season

Is now in the middle of the spring

After timely rain the fog is thick.

When I go around to check everything,

As farm-work takes the foremost place,

Peace and order I shall bring."

Spring comes early to the Nan'an Prefecture, which is located between the Yangtze River and the Guangdong Province. As a prefect, I spend most of the time in my mansion and know little about what happens in the remote villages and who is neglecting his farm-work. Yesterday I ordered that sweet wine be prepared to reward the farms. I believe everything is ready by now. (Wang Rongpei, 2000, 69)

Wang Rongpei's translation is to pay attention to the rhyme of the poetry and the cultural image to be conveyed by the poetry. At that time, advocating agriculture was a formalism for most people. However, for Du Bao, it is indeed a very important thing. Du Bao's thinking is actually an extension of Tang Xianzu's own thoughts. That is, the relationship between the government and the people is harmonious. The peasants actively engage in agricultural activities and the neighborhood is harmonious. But this translation text did not express Du Bao's strong feeling that he wanted to go to the village to see if the farmers actively cultivated the land.

4.2.2 The Contextual Level

In a specific context, communication is constrained

by contextual factors, including field of discourse, tenor of discourse, mode of discourse (Zhang Delu, 2009).

This is what happened when the bailiffs took the ready-made flowers and wines to the countryside for distribution. At the beginning, the mood of bailiffs were so good that they quickly took the wine into the country. On the road, they show off each other's speed. But accidentally there was an episode that spilled the wine. At this time, the two men began to push the fault to each other. The village elders came to take the liquor they carried. The servicemen also asked them not to take the blame, so wait until the prefect arrive, and do not speak out of this matter. The village elders are not angry. They also warmly invited them to drink in the tavern's pub. In this conversation, we can feel the very harmonious relationship between the bailiffs and village elders. There is no hierarchy, and there is a more equal relationship between them. The field of discourse means what happens here is when the prisoners accidentally spilled their wine and asked the villagers not to take any blame. The tone of the discourse is relatively peaceful and relaxed, because the relationship between the two is very harmonious. This section also mainly embodies the atmosphere of equality between the government and the people. Dialogue in this context is easy and enjoyable.

(Enter the bailiffs carrying sweet wine)

Bailiffs:

(To the tune of *Puxiange*)

We outrun thieves in chasing race;

Today we leave the office without a trace,

Bearing sweet wine at quick pace.

(stumble)

We nearly split the wine,

But the fault is not mine.

Village Elders:

Welcome to our village.

Bailiffs:

As the jar is cracked and some wine is leaking, please find some excuse for us.

Village Elders:

No problem. Put the jars aside and then have a drink in the village tavern (Wang Rongpei, 2000, 71).

In Wang Rongpei's translation, we can feel the relaxed and happy atmosphere of this dialogue, and can also read out the deep meaning of the official and the people get along with each others. Wang Rongpei's translation pays attention to rhyme, and it reads well and is suitable for performances on the stage.

4.2.3 The Content Level

The content level includes the meaning and form level. Discourse meaning mainly refers to the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function.

From the meaning level, in the process of translation, the accurate transmission of meaning is the most

important. In the translation of this passage, special attention must be paid to its deeper meaning. It is not only to express the beauty and orderly public life of Qingle Township, but to do a good job of showing off Du Bao's work during his tenure, and to keep the county's management in order. Now in the meaning of discourse, what is more important is the interpersonal meaning and the textual meaning. In particular, interpersonal meaning, that is, the expression of personal emotions and attitudes, and the meaning of the relationship between the purpose of communication and role. In this dialogue, both sides of the communication are satisfied with each other. That is, Du Bao is very satisfied with the beauty and orderly public life of Qingle Township. Qingle Township elders are satisfied of the work during Du Bao's tenure. Therefore, in the process of translating this paragraph should pay attention to reflect the harmonious relationship between Du Bao and village elders.

Du Bao:

Respected elders, what's the name of this village and township?

Village Elders:

This is the Number One Township Qingle.

Du Bao:

Let me have a good look.

(Looks around)

A pretty place with a pretty name Qingle-- tranquil and happy. Just look,

"The hill are clear;

Their followers are clear.

When lawsuits decrease,

The pastorals appear" (Wang Rongpei, 2000, 72—73).

In Wang Rongpei's translation, the harmonious relationship between Du Bao and villagers is well reflected, and the main meaning of the original text is also clearly conveyed. However, the translation has omitted some sentences. In my opinion the translation can be further detailed.

The formal level is a system of different forms of meaning. The relationship between modal grammars are divided into two categories: complementary and non-complementary. Multimodal discourse pattern typical is not the full expression of a modal. A modal will not be able to express it's meaning, or to express their full significance, which need the help of other to supplement. The relationship between the modes called "complementary relationship", the others are called the non-complementary relationship(Zhang Delu, 2009) . Complementary relationship includes reinforcement and non-enhancement, and non-complementary relationship includes inclusion ,overlap and contextual interaction.

Butler:

(Reports)

Here come two more women singing

(Enter two women, carrying baskets and plucking tea-leaves)

Two women:

(To the previous tune)

In late spring days

We pluck the fresh tea-leaves,

Leaves of topmost tea on trays?

Oh,who is the official over there?

A scholar brews the tea with snow;

A weary student longs for tea--

They both make tea with fire aglow.

Du Bao:

They sing a good song. Tell them that I'm not the famous scholars or weary student in the old days. I am the prefect inspecting the farms. I admire them for they work hard plucking tea-leaves. As is said in a poem,

"As there's no tea-star in the sky,

The young tea-nymph on earth is sly.

When girls engage in bets for tea,

In grander games the men would vie."

Give them flowers to wear and some wine to drink.

(The women put on the flowers and drink the wine)

All:

The tasty wine from gracious lord

And flowers on our heads

Are tea-leaf pluckers' best reward.

(Exeunt the two women) (Wang Rongpei, 2000, 78—79).

In this conversation, two women sang, and danced while they were tea-picking, and elicited from the protagonists of the two allusions the theme that they wanted to express-tea. During their performance of tea picking, dance and other forms of action and language are complementary relationships. Language, singing, dance are combined to construct the meaning. Therefore, in the process of translation of this passage, we must pay attention to the meaning expressed by various modalities. In Wang Rongpei's translation, he noticed the meaning expressed by various modes. But in the process of translation, the translation of the two allusions is not very good.

4.2.4 The Expression Level

From the traditional linguistic perspective, there are mainly two kinds of media forms to realize the spreading of significance: the sound symbols acoustic conduction and written symbols generated by pen. The two media are the main media of language dissemination of information (Zhang Delu, 2009). Gannan tea-picking opera translation belongs to the writing symbols at the expression level. But due to the duality of drama, when the Gannan tea-picking opera is performed on the stage, it belongs to the sound symbols at the expression level.

5. CONCLUSION

Through the application study of the framework of multimodal theory to analyze the Gannan tea-picking opera translation *Inspecting the Farms* respectively from the cultural, contextual, content and expression level, a variety of symbols of Gannan tea-picking

opera with language, singing, dance and other symbols could be combined together to construct the whole meaning of the context. Therefore, in the process of translation, translators should pay attention to multimodal information in the source text. When translating into target language, translators are also asked to pay attention to the accuracy of language expression.

Although there are some questions existing in the related researches of this subject, it still brings some practical applications. Gannan tea-picking opera translation from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis is a new way to study the translation of drama. Perhaps it's also an effective way to make the translation of Gannan tea-picking opera become more accurate and comprehensive.

Actually, there are still few studies on the translation of Gannan tea-picking opera. It is hoped that this article will give a high light on attracting more scholars to conduct in-depth research on Gannan tea-picking opera.

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