

Translation Analysis of Conceptual Metaphorical Expressions in Red Film Subtitles from the Perspective of Cognitive Equivalence: Taking “The Awakening Age” as an Example

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the translation issues of red-themed subtitles in the cognitive equivalence perspective, taking the Chinese drama series “Awakening Age” as an example. By analyzing the red-themed dialogues and subtitles in the series, this paper first introduces the concept of cognitive equivalence perspective and its importance in translation research. Subsequently, using specific examples from “Awakening Age,” the translation strategies for red-themed words and phrases in subtitle translation are analyzed, along with their impact on the audience’s cognitive experience. Finally, the research findings are summarized, and prospects for further research on the translation of red-themed subtitles in the cognitive equivalence perspective are proposed. Through the analysis of the translation of metaphorical conceptual words in the subtitles of red films, we can better understand how to handle metaphorical translation in cross-cultural communication, as well as how to convey cultural information while maintaining emotional resonance. Future research can further explore the translation of metaphors in other red films and examine the impact of different translation strategies on audience acceptance and understanding. This research provides theoretical support and reference for the study and practice in related fields by delving into the translation issues of metaphorical conceptual words in the subtitles of red films. It is of great significance for better conveying the cultural connotations and emotional resonance of red films, and promoting cross-cultural communication.

Keywords

Cognitive equivalence, Conceptual metaphor; Film subtitles.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of “cognitive equivalence” was proposed by Professor Liu Zhenguang, Dean of the School of Foreign Languages at Hunan University, in a lecture titled “Cognitive Equivalence and its Significance for Translation Theory.” He emphasized that semantics is the core of translation, and structure is the overall symbolic unit formed by form and meaning. Due to the limitations of language ambiguity and cognitive subjectivity, a one-to-one correspondence cannot be achieved between two languages. Therefore, in translation, more attention should be paid to conveying internal meaning and emotions, seeking commonalities between languages and transmitting them. Cognitive equivalence refers to the concept in translation theory that emphasizes achieving semantic equivalence between languages in order to maintain a similar cognitive experience for the audience. It suggests that translation is not merely a linguistic conversion but also involves establishing a cognitive communication that is equivalent across different cultures.

To achieve cognitive equivalence between the source text and the translated text, a clear cognitive understanding of the original subtitles is required. Red-themed film and television

works embody profound historical and cultural characteristics. Set against the backdrop of the New Culture Movement, May Fourth Movement, and the establishment of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese drama series "Awakening Age" depicts a magnificent historical panorama, reflecting the social trends and diverse human experiences during the awakening era. "Awakening Age" serves as an exemplary model for exploring and building a socialist modernized strong nation in our new era. It awakens the revolutionary spirit and patriotic sentiments in the hearts of young people and ignites people's concerns for the nation's future and destiny.

Therefore, the author believes that for the translation of these Chinese culture-specific dialogues, efforts should be made to be precise and appropriate, and whenever possible, to express and convey the elements of Chinese culture in the historical evolution, aiding foreign audiences in a deeper understanding of the spirit of the revolutionary pioneers and their patriotism.

The subtitles themselves also possess distinct cultural characteristics, and only with a clear understanding of the cultural background conveyed in the subtitles can we preserve and transmit cultural information while achieving cognitive equivalence. Translation is a process of cognitive transformation, and the result of translation is achieving cognitive equivalence. Due to the influence of different living environments and pragmatic habits, there are differences in cognitive modes between two languages, making it impossible for the source and translated texts to achieve absolute equivalence. However, attaining cognitive equivalence at the cognitive level is highly feasible. By establishing cognitive equivalence in the translation of red-themed subtitles, we can contribute to the international dissemination of Chinese red culture. Chinese red-themed film and television works possess distinct genetic elements of Chinese revolutionary history and culture, making the achievement of cognitive equivalence in their translation of significant importance for promoting Chinese culture on the global stage.

2. COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS AND COGNITIVE EQUIVALENCE

Cognitive linguistics is a discipline that studies the relationship between language and cognition, exploring how language reflects and shapes human thinking, perception, and cognitive processes. Cognitive equivalence, on the other hand, is an important concept in cognitive linguistics that emphasizes achieving semantic equivalence in translation and cross-cultural communication to maintain the audience's cognitive experience.

Cognitive linguistics argues that language is not just a tool for transmitting information but also reflects people's cognitive and understanding of the world. It emphasizes the inherent connection between the form and meaning of language and focuses on cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor, construction, and conceptualization. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, language is a manifestation of human cognitive structures, and through the use and understanding of language, people can connect abstract and complex concepts with concrete and familiar experiences.

There is a close relationship between cognitive linguistics and cognitive equivalence. Cognitive equivalence is an application of cognitive linguistics in the field of translation and cross-cultural communication. The concept of cognitive equivalence refers to a translation theory that emphasizes the semantic equivalence of a translation to the original text, in order to maintain the cognitive experience of the audience when receiving information. This theory argues that translation is not merely a linguistic conversion, but more importantly, it establishes an equivalent cognitive communication between different cultures. "Cognitive equivalence" refers to the ontological characteristics that human cognitive patterns share across different languages. It is based on the theory and starting point of cognitive linguistics, which considers the basic units of language as symbolic units composed of form and meaning. It focuses more

on the intrinsic connection between form and meaning, emphasizing the common features and differences of different languages from a holistic cognitive perspective. It seeks to identify the common principles or rules followed by different languages and cultures in understanding the world. Therefore, "cognitive equivalence" is also the foundation of cultural communication. Its essential attribute is the search for commonality within individuality, establishing an organic unity between commonality and individuality. It emphasizes the common features at the ontological level. Cognitive equivalence exists at the level of cognitive subjects and cultural levels, demonstrating theoretical consistency and internal coherence in explanations. It firmly grasps the essential characteristics of language and the basic principles of cognition, emphasizing the unity and contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity. The theory of cognitive equivalence holds that interpreting language is a process of human perception and experience. Even if there are differences in social systems and cultural environments, the cognitive physiological structure of humans remains the same. Based on this viewpoint, humans have cognitive equivalence in language. Cognitive language is the cognition of a conceptual scene, and cognitive equivalence in language refers to the cognitive equivalence of the conceptual scene. This project combines the characteristics of film and television subtitles to analyze different translation methods in order to achieve cognitive equivalence between Chinese and English, thereby showcasing the glorious image of revolutionaries and the spirit of patriotism and exploration in the film.

The idea of cognitive equivalence is based on the recognition that human cognitive patterns share underlying ontological features across different languages. It draws on the theoretical foundations and principles of cognitive linguistics, which consider language as a system of symbolic units composed of form and meaning. It highlights the intrinsic connection between form and meaning and focuses on examining the commonalities and differences in the cognitive aspects of different languages from a holistic perspective. Cognitive equivalence seeks to identify the shared principles or rules followed by different languages and cultures in their understanding of the world. It serves as the foundation for cultural communication and aims to establish an organic unity between the commonality and individuality within different linguistic and cultural contexts. It emphasizes the common features at the ontological level and acknowledges the dialectical unity between subjective and objective aspects of cognition.

The theory of cognitive equivalence suggests that language comprehension is a process of human perception and experience. It argues that despite the variations in social systems and cultural environments, human cognitive structures remain fundamentally the same. From this viewpoint, cognitive equivalence implies that humans have a similar cognitive capacity for language understanding across different cultures. Cognitive language involves the cognitive representation and understanding of a conceptual scene. Cognitive equivalence in language refers to achieving an equivalent cognitive representation and understanding of the conceptual scene across different languages. This means that the translation should not only convey the literal meaning but also capture the intended cognitive experience and perception associated with the original text.

In conclusion, cognitive equivalence is a concept in translation theory that emphasizes achieving semantic equivalence between languages to maintain a similar cognitive experience. It is rooted in cognitive linguistics and recognizes the shared cognitive patterns across different languages. By considering the cognitive aspects of language, cognitive equivalence aims to establish a cross-cultural cognitive communication and understanding.

3. ANALYSIS OF METAPHORICAL CONCEPT WORD TRANSLATION IN THE SUBTITLES OF “AWAKENING AGE”

Conceptual metaphor refers to the cognitive process by which abstract or complex concepts are understood and represented in terms of more concrete or familiar concepts. It involves mapping one domain of experience, known as the source domain, onto another domain, known as the target domain. This mapping allows individuals to understand and reason about abstract ideas by drawing upon their knowledge and experiences with more concrete concepts. Conceptual metaphor is a fundamental aspect of human cognition and plays a crucial role in language, thought, and communication. It allows us to understand and express abstract and complex ideas by relating them to more concrete and tangible experiences. For example, the metaphor “love is a journey” helps us make sense of the abstract concept of love by mapping it onto the more concrete concept of a journey. This allows us to talk about love in terms of traveling, milestones, and destinations.

Conceptual metaphors are pervasive in language and can be found in various domains such as emotions, time, relationships, and morality. They shape our understanding of the world and influence how we think, communicate, and make sense of our experiences. They provide a powerful tool for expressing and comprehending abstract concepts, as they draw upon our embodied experiences and sensory-motor systems. Conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary but are rooted in our embodied experiences, cultural contexts, and universal cognitive structures. They reflect how we understand and conceptualize the world based on our interactions with it. Different cultures may have variations in the metaphors they use, reflecting cultural differences and specific ways of understanding and representing concepts.

The study of conceptual metaphors has been widely explored in cognitive linguistics and related fields. Researchers have identified and analyzed a wide range of metaphors across languages and cultures, highlighting their pervasive presence and impact on language and thought. This research has provided valuable insights into how our cognitive processes shape our understanding of the world and how we communicate and convey meaning through language.

3.1. Example 1: 革命火种(gémìng huǒ zhǒng)

Translation: the spark of revolution

In Chinese culture, fire symbolizes passion, vitality, hope, and power. It is a source of energy that can dispel darkness and bring light and warmth. Therefore, “火种” (huǒ zhǒng) as the spark of fire represents the ability to ignite and awaken the passions and motivations within people. In traditional Chinese culture, fire is one of the five elements and represents passion, positivity, and vitality. In Chinese culture, fire is also seen as a symbol of transmitting wisdom and enlightening thoughts. As such, “火种” emphasizes its power to inspire, guide, and bring about change. In Chinese culture, “火种” is closely linked to the spirit of revolution. In the history of revolution in China, “火种” is often used metaphorically to describe the guiding and driving force behind revolutionary ideas and actions. It symbolizes the starting point of revolution, igniting people's determination and passion in adversity and ultimately triggering a widespread revolutionary movement. The translation “the spark of revolution” uses a literal translation method. This translation conveys the beginning and pivotal point of revolution, likening it to a spark that can ignite an entire revolutionary movement.

3.2. Example 2: 红色记忆(hóngsè jìyì)

Translation: Memories of the Red Era

“红色记忆” symbolizes the cherished memories and legacy of the revolutionary history and red culture. In Chinese history and culture, red symbolizes revolution and communism. Red is the emblematic color of the Communist Party of China, representing revolutionary spirit, people's power, and socialist ideology. Red flags, red scarves, and the red star are all symbols of Chinese revolution and socialist construction. “Memories of the Red Era” is a translation that adopts the method of additional translation. Translating “红色” (hóngsè) as “Red Era” expresses the relationship between the memories and the revolution and communism in greater detail. This translation connects the memories of red to a specific period, namely the revolutionary era under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. It emphasizes the significance of red memories as a symbol of the communist movement and highlights its importance in Chinese culture.

3.3. Example 3: 革命热土(gémìng rè tǔ)

Translation: Revolutionary Soil

In Chinese culture, “热土” (rè tǔ) symbolizes deep affection and love for one's hometown and motherland. It represents people's attachment and devotion to their homeland, expressing their sentiments towards their country and family. Chinese culture emphasizes the importance of respecting and cherishing family and motherland. Therefore, “热土” has become a symbol of this emotional attachment. In Chinese history, many important revolutionary movements originated from people's love for their own land and protests against injustice. “热土” symbolizes people's deep affection and love for their homeland, and in the context of revolution, it represents the fertile ground where revolutionary ideas and actions take root and grow. It conveys the idea that the love for one's homeland can serve as a powerful motivation for change and revolution. The translation of “革命热土” can be “revolutionary soil,” which captures the essence of this concept and its connection to revolutionary movements. The translation “revolutionary soil” uses a dynamic equivalence method providing a more detailed expression of the relationship between “红色热土” and revolution and communism. This translation closely associates “红色热土” with revolutionary land, emphasizing its role as the cornerstone and foundation of the revolution and communism.

4. SUMMARY

Through the analysis of the translation of metaphorical conceptual words in the subtitles of "The Awakening Age", we can see that translating metaphors in the perspective of cognitive equivalence is a complex and important task. Red films, as a special form of cultural expression, have rich historical, cultural, and emotional connotations, and metaphorical conceptual words carry important symbolic meanings. In the process of translation, we need to pay attention to maintaining the original meaning while conveying cultural information and emotional experiences, so that the audience can truly feel the thoughts and emotions conveyed in the film. This paper elucidates the translation strategies and techniques of metaphorical conceptual words in the subtitles of red films through case analysis. The translation theory of cognitive equivalence provides an effective framework for us to understand and deal with the challenges of metaphor translation. In the translation process, we need to flexibly use different translation strategies, such as literal translation, free translation, and adaptation, in order to accurately convey the meaning and emotion of the original text. This article has analyzed the language expressions, cultural metaphors, and historical background in subtitle translation, revealing the challenges and strategies involved in the translation process. It also recognizes that translation is not just about language conversion, but also about the transmission of culture and the bridge of communication. Red-themed films and TV shows, as an important part of Chinese

revolutionary history and the communist movement, hold unique significance in conveying ideas and emotions. In the translation process, it is important to stay faithful to the original while also focusing on conveying the cultural and emotional identities associated with these red-themed films and TV shows. Achieving better cognitive equivalence in the translation of red-themed film subtitles and striking a balance between cultural differences and emotional resonance are essential. By adopting a translation mindset based on cognitive equivalence, we can better present the historical, ideological, and emotional connotations contained in the original text in the target language. In conclusion, through the translation of metaphorical conceptual words in the subtitles of red films, we can better understand and convey the thoughts and emotions contained in red films. This is of great significance for promoting cross-cultural communication and enhancing understanding and friendship between different cultures.

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