

Original Paper

On Subtitle Translation Strategies under the Guidance of
Relevance Theory: With Evidence from the Movie *Wandering
Earth 2*

Hengrui Zhang¹

¹ College of Liberal Arts, Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology, Nanjing, China

Received: January 22, 2026
doi:10.22158/eltls.v8n2p71

Accepted: February 24, 2026

Online Published: March 20, 2026

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/eltls.v8n2p71>

Abstract

*With Chinese films increasingly reaching international audiences, the role of subtitle translation as a crucial facilitator of cultural exchange and comprehension has become paramount. This study, employing Relevance Theory as the theoretical framework, investigates the strategies in translating the subtitling of *Wandering Earth 2*, a Chinese sci-fi blockbuster. The findings reveal that to achieve optimal relevance, the translator can employ a combination of textual and cognitive strategies. At the textual level, techniques such as omission, addition, and paraphrase are used to overcome space and time constraints and enhance clarity. At the (cultural) level, strategies including domestication and foreignization strategies are observed, effectively minimizing comprehension barriers while introducing Chinese cultural concepts. This research underscores the explanatory power of Relevance Theory in audiovisual translation and offers practical insights into effective subtitle translation strategies.*

Keywords

*Relevance Theory, subtitle translation, *Wandering Earth 2*, translation strategy*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the global introduction of Chinese culture, films play an increasingly essential role in cultural exchange. Therefore, audiovisual translation (AVT in short) gradually draws people's attention. Thanks to the progress of technology and the unique cultural background, Chinese film receives growing attention from global audiences, and it is getting closer to the central stage of world's movies. However, more popular as the films and television work are, their translation research gain less popularity. In addition, the quality of current subtitle translation of Chinese audiovisual works is far from being satisfactory. Today, Chinese film serves as not only a form of entertainment, but an

introducer of Chinese culture and value. Therefore, studies on subtitling and its translation strategies turn out to be necessary. This prompted the author to make a study of subtitle translation strategies of Chinese film.

1.1 Research Background

Films are an indispensable member of art. In recent years, with the rapid development of the film industry and globalization, films have also played an increasingly important role in cultural exchanges between China and the West. While watching foreign movies, viewers cannot understand the meaning of dialogue, plot and even the cultural background without translation including subtitle translation. Therefore, the translation of subtitles has also become an important task for cultural communication. These days, Chinese films are gradually moving towards the international stage, and this provides a new chance for the spread of Chinese culture. When translating subtitles of Chinese movies, translators can choose and process the text based on Chinese cultural values, being aware of avoiding the loss of meaning as much as possible, and make film translation more accordant with the need of foreign publicity of Chinese culture. “For a long time in the future, translating Chinese movies abroad actively will be an important work of Chinese film and television, and it will play an important role in China's film and television going global” (Jin, 2017).

Subtitle translation is a special and emerging translation mode, and is becoming an indispensable element in the field of translation. Qian (2000), a famous professor in film and television translation, points out that the number of audiences of translated films is now far more than that of translated literary works, and the film translation's influence on society is no less than that of the literary translation. He also mentioned that the translation field places far less emphasis on film and television translation than literary translation. And this is not commensurate with the role film and television translation plays in society. Therefore, it is meaningful to conduct research on the movie translation to provide references for promoting cross-cultural communication or translation strategies.

Essentially, film is a form of communication, which exists between the movie producers and the audiences. Furthermore, the translator will join in such communication if the film is to be introduced to the international stage. Because the film is a channel of communication, Relevance Theory is capable of offering reference to the studies related to film and translation. And as an important role for interpreting the meaning of the film maker and a channel for film viewers to understand the film, the subtitle translator must serve as a messenger and help viewers from the target language to enjoy the film.

1.2 Introduction to Wandering Earth 2

Wandering Earth 2 is an exhilarating sequel to the sci-fi blockbuster *Wandering Earth*. Directed by Frant Gwo and based on Liu Cixin's novel, this highly anticipated follow-up continues the saga of humanity's struggle for survival in the face of cataclysmic cosmic events. Set in a future where Earth has become uninhabitable due to the impending explosion of the sun, the film delves deeper into the complexities of human resilience, sacrifice, and the unyielding quest for hope amidst despair.

Wandering Earth 2 gains overwhelming popularity in domestic movie market. According to Maoyan, a Chinese ticketing platform, *Wandering Earth 2* has seized over 4 billion yuan in total, ranking the top 10 of Chinese box office. In the international market, it also achieved a brilliant score. On January 29, 2023, *Wandering Earth 2*, which landed in the United States only a week ago, already achieved box office results of over 3 million dollars; In Europe, it was released in 58 cinemas in the UK and Ireland, with its first weekend box office reaching 2.4 million yuan, setting the best opening for Chinese language films in the region in 15 years.

Internationally acclaimed for its groundbreaking visual effects and immersive storytelling, *Wandering Earth 2* has garnered widespread recognition and accoladed on the global stage. Beyond its technical achievements, *Wandering Earth 2* also serves as a poignant reflection of Chinese cultural values and aspirations. Through its portrayal of courage, unity, and the enduring spirit of exploration, the film celebrates the indomitable human spirit and the resilience of humanity in the face of adversity. Moreover, it prompts audiences to ponder profound questions about the nature of existence, the pursuit of knowledge, and our collective responsibility to safeguard the future of our planet.

1.3 Research Purposes

The Chinese film *Wandering Earth 2* is recognized as one of the most influential Chinese science fiction movies, and it not only goes viral in domestic market, but also achieves a huge success all around the world. This movie realizes the integration of Chinese value, visual effect, and science fiction, expressing the China's proposal to build a community with a shared future for mankind. A reason why this movie can receive globally good comment lies that its translated subtitles are so faithful and coherent that foreign audiences can appreciate the film without burden; on the other hand, its subtitle translation manages to convey the Chinese value and culture vividly, presenting a new style of science fiction film to the target language audiences. Due to the appropriate translation strategies, the audiences of target language can enjoy the film with least information processing effort. Therefore, the subtitle translation of *Wandering Earth 2* can be seen as a successful case for the relevant studies.

In the present research, the author studied subtitle translation strategies from the perspective of Relevance Theory. One purpose was to analyze the subtitling strategies of *Wandering Earth 2* that make this movie widely recognized overseas and summarize the successful experience. The other was to explore the effectiveness of Relevance Theory in guiding the subtitle translation of films and televisions. It is hoped that this research may serve as a source of reference for AVT workers and scholars to conduct subtitle translation studies and practice, and that may help with the improvement of translation and international spread of Chinese films.

1.4 Research Methods

Relevance Theory, which is recognized as a theory of communication in nature for it provides many devices for communication analysis, was chosen as the theoretical basis for this research. The author adopted case studies based on the English translation script of the subtitles of *Wandering Earth 2*. First, a comparison between the Chinese and English subtitles was made. Then there was an analysis of the

reasons for the use of the subtitle translation strategies in the target version of the film with the core ideas of Relevance Theory including optimal relevance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Subtitle Translation Studies

The intertitle in silent film can be recognized as a forerunner of subtitling. The first film adopted intertitle is *Dorothy's Dream* in 1902. However, researchers did not start to study about AVT until the 1950s in the western world (Díaz-Cintas, 2009). Later, despite some values and characters of subtitling and subtitle translation pointed out by scholars (e.g., Dollerup, 1974; Titford, 1982; Delabastita, 1989), little importance was given to subtitling in Europe after the 1980s (Dong, 2007). Audiovisual translation saw its prosperous age in the 1990s. For example, the European Association for Study in Screen Translation (ESIST) was established in 1995, which greatly helped the development of AVT studies. As an international official organization of subtitling, the ESIST was responsible for the International Comparative Subtitling Project. It was well-arranged that more than 20 countries engaged and 18 languages were involved (Chen, 2015).

In recent years, western scholars begin to further extract the importance of subtitle translation. Patrícia (2014) suggests that watching movies with subtitles is helpful for language acquisition. Seda (2022) investigates the opinions of groups of audiences about Netflix with a special focus on the effect of subtitling films on the platform, and it turns out that subtitling is a driving factor for audiences to grow global perspective. Noa and Pilar (2024) conduct the research on an innovative teaching method, whose result demonstrates that using subtitling is beneficial for improving foreign language writing skills and translation capability.

Compared with Western countries, the relevant research on audiovisual translation in China started much later, and this is also the case for subtitling studies. In 1949, *Private Aleksandr Matrosov*, the first translated foreign film of the People's Republic of China, was released. This marks the beginning of Chinese audiovisual sector (Tan, 2014, p. 9). However, there was a domestically lack of attention of research on subtitling. As Qian (2000) puts it, "Generally speaking, Chinese studios and television stations did not do subtitling for films... Most of them preferred dubbing." This phenomenon lasted until the 1990s.

In the late 1990s, the academic research started to focus on the features of audiovisual translation as well as subtitle translation strategies (e.g., Ma, 1997; Zhang, 1998; Qian, 2000). What is more, along with the deepening of opening and China's entry to WTO, an unprecedented number of foreign films flew into China through various channels, including the Internet. This creates conditions for the emergence of many fansub groups, and such groups voluntarily subtitled movies and TV series overseas for Chinese Internet users. Apart from that, the official AVT organizations applied some reform measures, paying more attention to subtitling version (Tan, 2014, p. 11). Owing to above changes, Chinese subtitle translation gains a rapid development in both academic and practice areas.

Over decades of development, subtitling has become one of the hottest topics in AVT-related academic area according to the statistics (Wang et al., 2019). The current studies on subtitle have developed into diverse angles. At the theoretical level, translation theories such as functional equivalence (Liu & Li, 2023), Skopos theory (Zeng, 2023), and adaptation theory (Liu, 2023; Jiang, 2024) are adopted to research subtitling and subtitle translation. At the cross-disciplinary level, some scholars integrate AVT studies with other disciplines. For example, Jin (2023) studies the general history of film translation in China, attaching importance to the establishment of historical perspective for the development of subtitling. In addition, ecological translation (Zhang, 2017; Peng, 2023) and feminist translation theory (Liu, 2023) are also regarded as the theoretical frame to study subtitle translation.

2.2 Features of Subtitles and Constraints on Subtitle Translation

Subtitle translation can be seen as a special form in translation area, as it shares similarities with traditional literary translation, and it may be regarded as a part of literary translation with its own characteristics (Diaz-Cintas, 1999, p. 34), including sufficient consideration of language difference between source language and target language; while it holds distinctions of its own. The audiovisual text is defined as the language "written to be spoken as if not written" (Gregory & Carroll, 1978, p. 42). To achieve a subtitle translation of high quality, understanding the features and constraints of subtitle, which lies a solid foundation for the translation strategies analysis, proves to be necessary.

Subtitle translation is defined as a special language transfer form: a condensed written translation of the original spoken language (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993), or a procession of providing written simultaneous interpretation for dialogues in films and televisions (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997, p. 161). From the perspective of theory, it is explained into three closely integrated meanings (Luyken, 1991), namely, interlingual communication, the simplification or condensation of text, and converting oral language into written language.

Based on the definition of subtitle translation, the constraints and some features of subtitle translation can be clarified. European scholar Gottlieb (1992) puts forward two constraints on subtitle translation: Form Constraint and Textual Constraint. Textual Constraint refers to the content of subtitle is restricted by the visual context of a film. While Form Constraint means the physical limitation, in other words, time and space constraints. Diaz-Cintas (1999) lists that the subtitle needs to realize the synchrony with time, space, image, and spoken language. He also highlights that subtitling must accommodate itself to the spatial of the screen that usually allows a total of 35 characters per line, and the existence of two lines in a screen is maximum.

In China, the language of subtitles exhibits characteristics distinct from written language, primarily instantaneity and popularity (Ma, 1997; Qian, 2000, p. 63). Instantaneity means that subtitles appear on screen only briefly, preventing viewers from re-reading them as they might with a book (Zhang, 1998). Consequently, the translation must be concise and clear to ensure immediate comprehension. Popularity requires that the subtitle language be accessible to a broad audience with varying levels of education and cognitive ability. Zhang (1998, p. 48) argues that because viewers come from diverse

backgrounds, the translation should be simple and straightforward, which is why free translation often becomes the dominant strategy for audience-oriented subtitle texts.

From the studies above, the subtitles on the screen are an important part of the film works and most movies are produced for common audiences; hence the language of subtitling must correspond to the cognitive and educational level of the most of viewers. Apart from that, movie subtitles are mainly used to explain the dialogues, so they should meet the colloquial style of the text. Based on its characteristics, it can be concluded that film subtitle translation is more dynamic and demanding on the time and intelligible aspects.

2.3 Summary

During recent years, both western and Chinese scholars have paid increasing attention to subtitle translation, and some achievements have been gained thanks to their contributions. These research results provide beneficial inspiration and methodologies for us to further study the subtitle translation. However, there is room for improvement:

- (1) Western countries have discussed many aspects of subtitle translation, including the process, features, and so on. However, their research limitedly focuses on the language translation issue among European nations, giving less attention to the conversation between English and Chinese.
- (2) Chinese study on subtitle translation begins later than western countries, and although many features and strategies have been discussed and put forward by Chinese scholars, there is an absence of systematic theory of AVT and subtitle translation.
- (3) Both scholars from home and abroad mainly concentrate on AVT practice or the academic study based on translation theories, but very few of them conduct research from a cross-disciplinary perspective.

To sum up, such deficiencies offer some study space for this paper. The purpose of the paper is to analyze the translation strategies of Chinese film *Wandering Earth 2* from the perspective of Relevance Theory to help foreign audiences to have a better understanding of the movie and the Chinese culture as well as value behind it, improving the communicative effect of Chinese film overseas.

3. Relevance Theory

3.1 Introduction to Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory is initially put forward by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995). It is defined as a cognitive theory of communication and understanding. It aims to explain how people process and interpret information in communication to understand the meaning and the intension of speaker from it. Gutt (1991), who is a student of Wilson, applied the theory into translation studies, presenting a new powerful tool for translation. He (1998) justifies that translation belongs to the interlingual communication as well as a pragmatic act, and thus, Relevance Theory is adaptable to translation study and practice.

According to Relevance Theory, communication is a process that the speaker intends to create a

cognitive effect in the mind of the listener. The speaker does this by constructing an utterance that is expected to be relevant to the listener's current cognitive context. The listener, in turn, tries to process the utterance in a way that maximizes the relevance of the information obtained. Relevance, in this context, refers to the perceived value or utility of the information in relation to the listener's goals, expectations, and cognitive environment. The relevance of an utterance is determined by the cognitive effort required to process it compared to the cognitive effects it yields. Relevance Theory also emphasizes the role of contextual assumptions and the concept of implicature. Contextual assumptions are the background knowledge and expectations that individuals bring to the communication process, which help them derive meaning from the utterances. Implicature refers to the inferred meaning that goes beyond the literal interpretation of an utterance, based on the relevance of the information conveyed.

In Relevance Theory, the communication is seen as an ostensive-inferential behavior. The communicator firstly assesses the cognitive environment and the context of the listener or reader, and conveys their intentions to the listener through discourse explicitly and implicitly; The listener processes the information provided by the discourse with relevant contextual information, and decodes the discourse, ultimately achieving recognition of the communicator's communicative intention.

As the explanation put by Sperber and Wilson (1995, p. 260), human cognition tends to achieve the maximal relevance in communication. In other words, the relevance is not a yes-no question but a matter of degree, and the degree of relevance is directly affected by two factors: the cognitive (contextual) effects and the processing effort. Other things being equal, the more the contextual effect, the stronger the relevance; the less processing effort, the greater the relevance. However, what the listeners need is not usually the maximal relevance, namely, inputting the least processing effort for the maximal contextual effect. In contrast, they are more inclined to pursue the optimal relevance, which refers to the fact that they do not need to spare unnecessary effort but also realize an enough contextual effect (Gutt, 1991). In relevance translation, the optimal relevance becomes the goal for translations (Lin, 1994).

3.2 Relevance Theory and Translation

Translation can be recognized as a kind of communication (Lv, 1997), which researches on the understanding and expression of language. So, it is reasonable to regard translation as an ostensive-inferential behavior (Lin, 1997; Zhao, 1999). According to Zhang & He (2001), based on this conclusion, they further point out that translation is a more complicated ostensive-inferential behavior for it consists of two ostensive inferences. As a matter of fact, there are three communicators in translation, namely, the speaker from the source language (SL), the translator and the hearer from the target language (TL). In the first turn of ostensive inference, the speaker/writer from SL indicates communicative intention and the translator understand the meaning through the context and Relevance Theory. After that, the translator becomes the speaker and completes the second ostensive inference with the TL hearer. To make the description clearer, please check the illustration below.

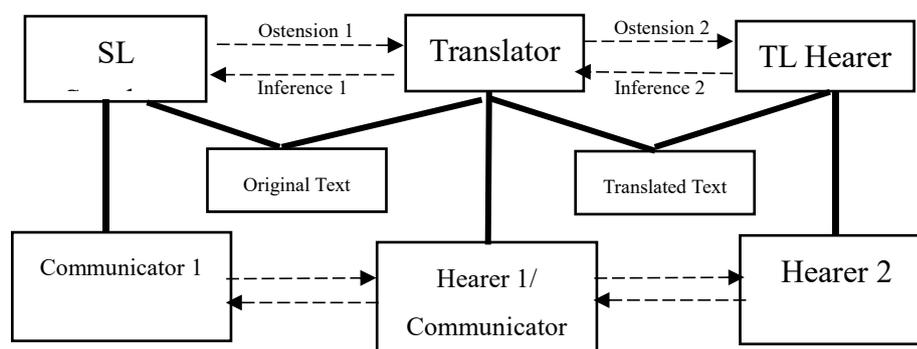


Table 1. Ostensive-Inferential Process in Translation

When people communicate, they try to produce some effects on themselves or others, but they are not aiming to maximize these effects: they are happy with some effect commensurate with their effort (Chen, 2021). That is optimal relevance, which is one of the most essential goals in a communication. During translation, a translator should also try to achieve this goal, in other words, a translator is supposed to leading the TL audiences to comprehend the meaning of the text without sparing much effort (Lin, 1994), and it is also the translator's responsibility to make the expectation of the TL readers in agreement with the intention of the SL writer. Owing that the translation involves double rounds of ostensive-inferential acts, the translator is supposed to take both sides into consideration. On the one side, the translator is obliged to understand the intention of SL speaker from his communicative clues, and in the second ostensive-inferential process, he or she should convey the information that interpretively resembles the original meaning and intention to the TL hearer.

Specifically speaking, the goal of subtitle translation is to convey the original meaning of the movie and the intension of the director or the speaker in the film as much as possible to the audiences, enabling them to enjoy the film without much stress of understanding. In subtitle translation, a subtitle translator should make the subtitle generate the sufficient contextual effects without excessive processing-effort requirement for the foreign audiences. Translated subtitles need to provide the audiences with best explanation that covers not only what characters say but the real intention behind their dialogues. Sometimes some strategies and techniques may be employed to ensure that the viewer can immediately comprehend with the least processing efforts.

By applying Relevance Theory to the film subtitle translation, translators can grasp the relationship between the original work and audiences in communication. It is expected to make film audiences intimately associated with the original by employing some strategies. In the translated subtitles of *Wandering Earth 2*, the relevant strategies such as condensation, omission and paraphrase are employed to achieve the optimal relevance.

4. Subtitle Translation Strategies: A Case Study of *Wandering Earth 2*

Under the guidance of Relevance Theory, the classification of subtitle translation strategies should account for not only the transformation of linguistic forms but also the impact on cultural cognition and psychological reception. Traditionally, translation strategies are often categorized into literal and free translation (Chen, 2008, p. 1), as well as domestication and foreignization (Wang, 2002). However, these two pairs of strategies function at different levels: literal and free translation primarily operate at the textual-linguistic level, focus on the form and meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. In contrast, domestication and foreignization operate at the cognitive level, concerned with the translator's psychological and moral stance towards cultural elements. This distinction is further supported by Jiang and He (2016, p. 210), who argue that domestication and foreignization contain profound literary and cultural connotations. If literal translation are discussions at linguistic level, then domestication and foreignization extend the discussion to the cultural level. Based on this theoretical understanding, the analysis of translation strategies in *Wandering Earth 2* is divided into two corresponding dimensions. In the 4.1, translation strategies are discussed at the textual level; while in the 4.2, strategies including domestication and foreignization are observed to deal with cultural translating issues.

4.1 Textual Level

some strategies are associated with the textual dimension of the source language's text, focusing on the form of textual components such as words, phrases and so forth. In the subtitle translation of the *Wandering Earth 2*, some textual strategies such as omission, addition, and paraphrase are employed to achieve the optimal relevance.

4.1.1 Omission for Saving Processing Effort

Omission is a necessary strategy in audiovisual translation, and especially subtitle translation because the length and time of subtitle is strictly limited. In order to achieve the optimal relevance, the subtitle translator needs to convey the real intention of the utterance while keeping closest meaning of source language. Under such circumstance, the translator can omit some language elements that do not affect much the expression of intension to make it easier for the TL audiences to read. This case can be found as indicated in the following example.

Example 5

SL

中国航天飞行中队
五十岁以上的
出列

TL

Chinese squadron
Everyone aged over 50
Step forward

This is Zhang Peng's word to command the members over 50 years old of China Aerospace Flying Squadron to execute the task for the survival of humanity. “中国航天飞行中队” is translated in a brief way as “Chinese squadron”. If the name of squadron is entirely translated, the subtitle would be lengthy. On the one hand, this may go against the limitation of space and time in subtitling. On the other hand, TL audiences have to spare much time (more processing efforts) reading it for the similar information that can be acquired by shorter expression. The cognitive effect being equal, the optimal relevance cannot be achieved if the processing effort is spent more. Therefore, although some information is omitted, the core intention of this sentence (to appoint the Chinese group among global squadrons) is still expressed.

4.1.2 Addition for Achieving Better Contextual Effect

Although the subtitle translation is always constrained by the size of screen and the dialogue time, sometimes the appropriate addition is necessary because of the language and cultural differences. The subtitle translator may add some more explanation to make the speaker's intension more obvious to reduce the understanding difficulty of TL audiences and improve the degree of relevance. For example, Example 6

SL

到那个时候

我相信会再次看到蓝天

鲜花挂满枝头

TL

By that time

I believe the reunion under the blue sky

When the blossoms hang from every bough

In example 6, the text of SL (“I believe we can see the blue sky and blossoms hang from every bough again”) is a beautiful imagination that human beings successfully lead the Earth to a new galaxy after overcoming countless challenges. The speaker uses images of hope, such as blue sky and blossoms, and his intention is to appeal all countries to stay in solidarity and work together to tackle the present difficulties. Therefore, the translator adds a “reunion” to give prominence of the speaker's intention. In this way, the TL audiences can grasp the sufficient contextual effects with less processing efforts.

4.1.3 Paraphrasing for Reducing Processing Effort

In some SL texts, it is often seen that the literal meaning of some subtitles provide deficient information for foreign viewers, and thus, their contextual effects are insufficient. In this case, the translator is expected to clarify the implied or contextual meaning of the original subtitle. Sometimes paraphrasing becomes an acceptable strategy to offer enough information.

Example 7

SL

作为地球之光的我

去年就该去月球
非得让我再带一届

TL

As Light of the Earth

I should've gone to the Moon last year

But they made me stay and teach for another year.

In the SL of example 7, “非得再带一届” is a special expression with Chinese style. For one thing, it is a null-subject sentence, because in Chinese, it is allowed to ignore the subject of sentence as long as the meaning and intention are conveyed; for another, “再带一届” is a concept that is closely linked with Chinese education. It means that a teacher gives lessons for a newly enrolled student group. If this sentence is translated in a literal way, it may confuse the TL audiences and cost them more unnecessary information processing efforts. Taking these factors into consideration, the translator adopts paraphrasing strategy and translates it into “But they made me stay and teach for another year”. Firstly, the translated version is a typical English sentence structure containing a subject that meets the English-speaker’s language habits. Secondly, it achieves the coherence with the last sentence by explaining the reason that the speaker does not go to the Moon. By doing so, the TL audiences can obtain the contextual effect as much as possible while spending the least processing effort.

4.2 Cultural Level

Due to the diversity of environments and the distinctive features of cultures, there are many special expressions that one language may not find their corresponding equivalence in another one, especially those culture expressions. To solve such issue in translating, scholars at home and abroad have conducted long-term discussions. Schleiermacher first suggested that translator should adopt an alienating translation method (Munday, 2001), which was further developed by Venuti (1995, pp. 19–20), as domestication and foreignization. Chinese scholar Wang (2002) argues that such methods have been evolved from language level to cultural level. Among translated subtitles of the *Wandering Earth 2*, these strategies are observed.

4.2.1 Domestication for Least Processing Effort

Domestication refers to a type of strategy of making the translation close to TL readers, conveying the content of the original text in the way that they are accustomed to. In literary translation, it is defined as a reader-oriented strategy because it can help readers better understand the target text and enhance its readability. In the film translation, the translator is expected to be aware of the TL audiences’ cognitive environment when translating subtitles. Hence, using domestication is desirable. For example,

Example 8

SL:

咱家月亮上
都能建发动机
连人都不用

自动的

那咋咋地整 快

只要没人搞破坏

半年妥妥地

TL:

We can even

Build these engines on the Moon.

No Humans needed

All built by machines.

Non-stop

As long as no one tries to sabotage the construction

Six months should be enough

Example 9

SL

就这条街

不这样

夜市老好了

TL

This street

Was not like this.

The night market rocked

The above two examples are cited from the character in the film, Zhang Peng, a great pilot as well as the teacher of the main character Liu Peiqiang. Zhang Peng has a strong Chinese Northeastern accent, which creates a humorous atmosphere for the film, and Chinese audiences can easily catch the point. However, it would confuse foreign audiences if these sentences are translated word-by-word. In example 8, “那咋咋地整 快” uses a Northeastern onomatopoeic word to describe the high-efficient construction of engines. Likewise, “妥妥地” is a typical expression of Northeastern style to explain something can be definitely completed. But for TL audiences, there is no need for them to spend more processing efforts to understand what the onomatopoeic word really means. Therefore, the translator adopts domestication strategy, directly and clearly conveying Zhang Peng’s intention by translating them into “Non-stop” and “should be enough” so that TL audiences have access to the most relevant meaning and most similar contextual effects, and save a lot of unnecessary processing efforts.

In example 9, “老好了” is also a Northeastern dialect, it means “something that is terrific or amazing”. Here the translator deeply understands the original text, and domesticates it with an English idiom “rocked”. It not only perfectly conveys the intended meaning, but also achieves the equivalence in oral form, increasing the familiarity for TL audiences.

4.2.2 Foreignization in Sufficient Contextual Effect

Foreignization refers to a kind of the translation strategy that the translator intends to remain some cultural or linguistic features of the source language, conveying the content of the original text by the corresponding source SL expressions. For some cultural-loaded things that are easy to understand and catch on, foreignization is welcomed. Following examples will be presented below:

Example 10

SL

给你取份子去了

快请上座

TL

I just went to get your red envelope

Please take a seat

The example 3 occurs in the wedding ceremony of hero and heroine. “份子”(“Fen Zi”) also known as gift money. Presenting “Fen Zi” is a traditional Chinese folk custom. It is usually money given during weddings, childbirth, and birthday ceremonies, packaged in a small red envelope. There is no custom of giving money as gifts abroad, and this word has no equivalent usage abroad. Therefore, the translator adopts a foreignization translation strategy, translating its package “red envelop” literally. TL audiences may not understand it at first sight, but this can be compensated by the visual context, in other words, the content on the screen. As audiences watch the character on the screen holding the “red envelop” as a gift in wedding ceremony, they can also know what this thing represents for. So, the relevance can also be achieved.

Example 11

SL

等到月亮看不见了

也不知道中秋节放不放假

有月饼吃就行

TL

When the Moon is too far to be seen

They'll probably cancel the Mid-Autumn Holiday

I'll be ok as long as we have mooncakes

The Mid-Autumn Festival is a traditional Chinese festival that contains rich cultural connotation. In the movie, the Moon is excelled by engines out of its orbit around the Earth to ensure that the Earth is free from the gravitational constraints of the Earth and the Moon, and to smoothly implement the "Mountain Moving Plan". Under such background, it is clever to introduce the Mid-Autumn Festival to the global audiences. In subtitle translation, the translator properly apply foreignization strategy to transfer “也不知道中秋节放不放假”(I don't know whether there be the Mid-Autumn Holidays) into “They'll probably cancel the Mid-Autumn Holiday”. By doing so, the translator manages to introduce

traditional Chinese culture while directly indicating the intention of asking questions, and helps TL audiences to reduce resistance to understanding the plot when accepting traditional Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

The paper conducts a case study of subtitle translation strategies of the Chinese sci-fic movie *Wandering Earth 2* from the perspective of Relevance Theory. The analysis indicates that Relevance Theory can be applied to research the subtitle translation. Based on the theoretical framework, the process of translation is viewed as an ostensive-inferential practice with two rounds. And the translator, as a communicator between the speaker and the listener or audience, shoulders the responsibility that fully understand the intention of the speaker and then create the optimal relevance for the audience.

Due to the space and time constraints, the pursuit of optimal relevance poses challenges to the subtitle translator. However, the translator can turn to some strategies to create the adequate contextual effects for the target language audiences to obtain the optimal relevance with least processing effort.

The successful translated subtitle of *Wandering Earth 2* helps it introduce the Chinese value and culture to the world, and gain the wide-recognition from the international community. Based on the case study, it can be observed that the subtitle translator employs various strategies to convey the original intentions, aiming to realize the optimal relevance. At the cultural level, domestication and foreignization are adopted to deal with the language transfer issues caused by cultural difference. At the textual level, strategies including omission, addition and paraphrasing are used to clearly explain the SL speaker's implied meaning to let the TL audiences understand without extra processing efforts.

In conclusion, this research underscores the practical applicability of Relevance Theory in audiovisual translation. The findings suggest that a conscious pursuit of optimal relevance through flexible and context-sensitive strategy selection can significantly enhance the accessibility and intercultural effectiveness of subtitle translation, offering actionable insights for translators working on similar cinematic texts.

References

- Birgit, N. (1993). Culture-bound Problems in Subtitling. *Perspective*, 1(2), 207-240.
- Chen, F. (2000). *Revised edition of the history of Chinese translation theory*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Delabastita, D. (1989). Translation and mass translation: Film and TV translation as evidence of cultural dynamics. *Babel*, 35(4), 192-238.
- Díaz-Cintas, J. (1999). Dubbing or subtitling: The eternal dilemma. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 7(1), 31-38.
- Díaz-Cintas, J. (2009). *Audiovisual translation: Language transfer on screen*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dollerup, C. (1974). On subtitles in television programmes. *Babel*, 20(2), 197-202.
- Dong, H. (2007). An overview of audiovisual translation studies in Western context. *Shanghai Journal*

- of Translators, 1*, 12-17.
- European Commission. (2011). *Study on the use of subtitling: The potential of subtitling to encourage foreign language learning and improve the mastery of foreign languages*. Final report.
- Gong, F. (2011). *Introduction to translation*. Higher Education Press.
- Gottlieb, H. (1992). Subtitling: Diagonal translation. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology, 1*(1), 31-38.
- Gregory, M., & Carroll, S. (1978). *Language and situation: Language varieties and their social contexts*. Routledge.
- Gutt, E.-A. (1991). *Translation and relevance: Cognition and context*. Basil Blackwell.
- Gutt, E.-A. (1998). Pragmatic aspects of translation: Some relevance theory observations. In L. Hickey (Ed.), *The pragmatics of translation* (pp. 41-53). Multilingual Matters.
- He, Z. (1997). *Pragmatics and English learning*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Jiang, X. (2024). A study on subtitle translation of *La La Land* from the perspective of adaptation theory. *Today's Creative Writing, 6*, 96-98.
- Jiang, Q., & He, G. (2016). *Introduction to translation*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Jin, H. (2017). The prototype of Chinese films going global: An analysis of the translation models of Chinese silent films. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, 39(8), 99-102.
- Jin, H. (2023). A general history of film translation in China: Connotation, methods, and significance. *Journal of Foreign Languages, 46*(4), 91-99.
- Kilic, S. (2022). A socio-semiotic approach to meaning. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology, 30*(4), 537-551.
- Li, K. (2004). On advertising translation strategies. *Chinese Translators Journal, 6*, 66-71.
- Lin, K. (1994). An introduction to relevance translation theory. *Chinese Translators Journal, 4*, 8-11.
- Lin, K. (1997). An introduction to relevance translation theory (continued). *Chinese Translators Journal, 5*, 15-18.
- Liu, J., & Li, R. (2023). A study on subtitle translation from the perspective of functional equivalence theory: Taking *Homeless to Harvard* as an example. *Journal of Changchun University, 33*(11), 59-65.
- Liu, J. (2023). An analysis of subtitle translation from the perspective of feminist translation theory: Taking the movie *Barbie* as an example. *Today's Creative Writing, 13*, 100-102.
- Lv, J. (1997). Translatology: A special field of communication studies. *Journal of Foreign Languages, 2*, 40-45.
- Luyken, G.-M. (1991). *Overcoming language barriers in television: Dubbing and subtitling for the European audience*. European Institute for the Media.
- Ma, Z. (1997). On the basic principles of audiovisual translation. *Modern Communication (Journal of Beijing Broadcasting Institute), 5*, 81-84.

- Maoyan Professional Edition. (2023). - *Wandering Earth 2*. Retrieved April 13, 2024, from <https://piaofang.maoyan.com/movie/1366696>
- Miao, Y. (2022). Translation techniques of idioms in novels from the perspective of relevance translation theory: Taking the English translation of *Fortress Besieged* as an example. *Today's Creative Writing*, 25, 123-125.
- Molina, L., & Albir, A. H. (2002). Translation techniques revisited: A dynamic and functionalist approach. *Meta*, 47(4), 498-512.
- Munday, J. (2001). *Introducing translation studies: Theories & applications*. Routledge.
- Nedergaard-Larsen, B. (1993). Culture-bound problems in subtitling. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, 1(2), 207-240.
- Noa, T., & Pilar, R. (2024). Subtitling short films to improve writing and translation skills. *Spanish Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 37(1), 57-82.
- Patrícia, A. A. (2014). Foreign language acquisition: the role of subtitling. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 141, 1234-1238.
- Peng, Y. (2023). Subtitle translation of *Wandering Earth 2* from the perspective of eco-translatology. In *Proceedings of the 2023 Literature and Cultural Development Seminar*. China Intelligent Engineering Research Association.
- Qian, S. (2000). Audiovisual translation: An increasingly important field in translation. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 1, 61-65.
- Rundle, C., & Sturge, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Translation under fascism*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shuttleworth, M., & Cowie, M. (1997). *Dictionary of translation studies*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.
- Tan, H. (2014). *A history of film dubbing in China*. China Film Press.
- Titford, C. (1982). Sub-titling: Constrained translation. *Lebende Sprachen*, 27(3), 113-116.
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.
- Wang, D. (2002). Domestication and foreignization: A clash of spear and shield?. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 5, 26-28.
- Wang, J., Zhou, Y., & Zhang, J. (2019). Thirty years of Chinese audiovisual translation research (1989–2018): A visual analysis based on CiteSpace. *Shanghai Journal of Translators*, 2, 33-38.
- Wenhui Net. (2023, February 2). *Wandering Earth 2 is hot in North America and the UK, enters the top 10 box office in North America, and receives high praise from overseas netizens*. Retrieved April 13, 2024, from <https://www.whb.cn/zhuzhan/huanqiu/20230202/506127.html>
- Xiao, W. (2013). *A Practical Course in English-Chinese Audiovisual Translation*. East China University of Science and Technology Press.
- Xiong, B. (2014). Conceptual confusion in translation studies: Taking “translation strategy,” “translation method,” and “translation technique” as examples. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 35(3),

82-88.

- Xu, Q., & Wang, F. (2002). The explanatory power of relevance theory on humorous discourse and its translation. *Foreign Language Education*, 5, 21-26.
- Yu, Q. (2022). A study on the translation of culture-loaded words in Tang poetry from the perspective of relevance theory: Taking Xu Yuanchong's English translation of Tang poetry as an example. *Today's Creative Writing*, 24, 114-116.
- Zeng, W. (2023). A brief analysis of Chinese-English subtitle translation of traditional Chinese animated films from the perspective of Skopos theory: Taking *White Snake* as an example. *Today's Creative Writing*, 8, 108-110.
- Zeng, Y. (2009). *On English-Chinese news headline translation* (Unpublished master's thesis). Henan University.
- Zhang, C. (1998). A preliminary study of audiovisual translation. *Chinese Translators Journal*, 2, 49-52.
- Zhang, X., & He, Z. (2001). Pragmatic translation: The application of pragmatic theory in translation. *Modern Foreign Languages*, 3, 286-293.
- Zhang, Z. (2017). *Documentary subtitle translation from the perspective of eco-translatology* (Unpublished master's thesis). Beijing Foreign Studies University.
- Zhao, Y. (1999). The theoretical basis of relevance translation theory. *Chinese Science & Technology Translators Journal*, 4, 1-4.
- Zhu, Y. (2019). A study on the application of relevance translation theory in college English translation teaching. *Contemporary Education Research and Teaching Practice*, 14, 179-180.
- Zhu, Y. (2007). The explanatory power of relevance theory on the translation of humorous speech. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, 2, 57-60.