Original Paper

Intersemiotic Shifts in the Subtitle Translation of *Journey to the West* via a Multimodal Framework

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Abstract

Journey to the West is one of the four famous Chinese classical works and it was reproduced into TV drama both at home and abroad, which has aroused great concern. However, current studies mainly compare the English translated versions with Chinese one, focusing on the translation strategies for the verbal texts or on the cultural level. Therefore, this study explores different kinds of intersemiotic shifts in the subtitle translation of Journey to the West and reasons that have caused these intersemiotic shifts via a multimodal analytical framework. Ten episodes chosen according to the plots will be analyzed. Findings show that there are mainly six kinds of intersemiotic shifts in the Journey to the West. Image and para-/non-verbal modes can supplement the meaning expressed in the verbal texts.

Keywords

Journey to the West, audiovisual text, subtitle translation, multimodality

1. Introduction

Chinese classical works have been widely translated into many languages, like *Journey to the West* (or *Pilgrimage to the West*) (Chinese Pinyin: *Xiyou Ji*), which has also been reproduced as TV dramas and exported overseas. Chinese TV dramas went abroad from the 1980s, which has played an important role in shaping the image of China (Liang, 2018, p. 38).

The first official broadcast of *Journey to the West* was in the Spring Festival of 1986 with only Chinese subtitles. In January 2021, China Central Television (CCTV) remade this version into an American-sounding one with English subtitles. Netflix, being regarded as the largest media service provider in the America, also released this version.

Audiovisual text (AVT), as a semiotic construct, is made up by a series of signifying codes, which operate concurrently to produce the meaning (Chaume, 2004, p. 16). Subtitling, being a significant part of the AVT studies, has received tremendous scholarly attention (e.g., Guillot, 2020, p. 317; Labarta

Postigo, 2020, p. 46; Brumme, 2016, p. 346). However, current studies towards *Journey to the West* mainly focus on the Chinese classical works, especially the effect of cultural transmission (Cao, 2020, p. 130; Feng et al., p. 117), the translation of culture-loaded words or related rhetorical devices (Lu et al., 2018, p. 186) or comparison between the language of English versions and Chinese one on the perspective of texts merely. Due to the high translation quality from the CCTV, great interests of audience both at home and abroad, and less studies on subtitle translation via multimodality, it deserves further research for the translation studies using a multimodal approach.

This paper consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces background information and an overview of thesis structure. Chapter 2, the literature review chapter, critically reviews several related studies about subtitling, current studies of *Journey to the West* and translation via multimodality. Chapter 3 proposes the research questions and a modified multimodal analytical framework. Chapter 4 presents the intersemiotic shifts in the subtitles of *Journey to the West* and discusses the functions of non-verbal modes. Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, sums up the major findings, and discusses the limitations of the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 AVT and Subtitling

With the development of digital media gaming and production, translation, subtitling and dubbing have gradually been the indispensable elements from the first versions of silent movies to more latest filmography. And also under the background of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the role AVT and multimodality suffered greater pressures than ever, which also accelerate the development of AVT and multimodality, such as online teaching (Tomei & Chetty, 2021, p. 55). And also as social networks and streaming platforms develop rapidly, AVT has occupied an unprecedented place in the global communication of today's society (Díaz-Cintas & Zhang, 2022, p. 1).

Subtitles, can be considered as "a distinctive instantiation of cinematic discourse and a distinctive form of translation" (Guillot, 2020, p. 317). In the context of global information exchange, subtitling, adding text to the screen in various languages but keeping the original soundtrack, is attached great importance to understand the meaning presented (Labarta Postigo, 2020, p. 47).

2.2 Related Translation Studies on the Journey to the West

Journey to the West, as one the four famous Chinese classical works written by Wu Chengen, is based on a true story that a Chinese monk named Xuan Zang to fetch back some scriptures. This fairy tale is about Xuan Zang and his three disciples passing eighty-one difficulties to get the true scriptures and become Buddhas eventually.

On the one hand, more related translation studies, as comparative studies, focus on linguistic modes of different translation versions, such as the translation strategies for the related rhetorical devices or verbal humor in the translated versions. Lu et al. have explored characteristics of verbal humor between the *Journey to the West* and its English translated version. Through the establishment of a bilingual

168

parallel corpus, findings show that there are there translation modes used to deal with the rhetorical devices during the process of translation: simile, metaphor and metonymy (p. 192).

In another comparative study, Ji has done a comparison of different approaches in the two major English translations, *Monkey* by Arthur Waley and *The Monkey and the Monk* by Anthony Yu. The results reveal that Yu's translation is more faithful to the original (p. 77).

On the other hand, existing studies have explored the effect of cultural transmission for the better cross-cultural communication. Based on the English readers' feedback of the *Journey to the West*, Yu and Zheng have investigated into overseas reception effect through sentiment analysis and content analysis of readers' comments. It has been found that readers' feedback in the past decade (2011-2020) has increased a lot, showing an overall good communication effect (p. 89).

Similarly, since *Journey to the West* has been translated and disseminated overseas for hundreds of years, Cao have examined the spread in Europe and America to get a glimpse of the dilemma for the classic Chinese literary works in the West and provide reference for the Chinese traditional culture "going out" strategy (p. 130).

2.3 Multimodality and Translation

In light of the thriving of mass media, recent years have witnessed an increasingly crucial role that multimodal works play in cultural transmission. Instead of the sole mode of text, multimodal works have become one of the crucial tools to powerfully convey significant messages, especially to promote traditional Chinese culture in the context of globalization.

Multimodal translation, offering an interdisciplinary approach for the studies of translation, has attracted great interests and witnessed great development in recent years. However, there are few studies that research on translation via a multimodal approach (Tomei & Rajendr, 2021, p. 55).

Over the past years, studies on the translation often merely rely on the transfer of the verbal texts while the other modes are neglected. However, visual code is crucial to provide pragmatic inferences of meaning for the translation (Sidiropoulou, 2020, p. 284). Recently, scholars have begun to involve a large number of non-linguistic factors during the process of interpreting, such as tone, intonation, facial expression, gaze and body language (Chen et al., 2020, p. 83). Besides interpreting, children's picture book and cartoons also can be regarded as a kind of intersemiotic translation. The relationship between the image and the texts deserve to be researched. In the cartoons, characters communicate and interact with each other not only through linguistic modes like dialogue boxes and speech bubbles signifying mental activities, but also through non-verbal elements like gestures, postures, gaze and facial expressions, with the role of visual modes being equally important with these verbal modes (p. 84).

While the multimodal approach is not only used to analyze the static discourses, it can also be applied to dynamic media discourses, such as the video and film. Tomei and Chetty have presented multimodal tables, including thematic focus, kinesics (non-verbal communication like body movements and gestures), music and voice, and have analyzed the macro-textual modifications that result from the differences in translations (p. 57). What's more, the functions of image and para-verbal elements for the

169

meaning of the Source Text (ST) conveying to the Target Text (TT) reader have been carefully discussed for the translation of costume drama subtitles of *Zhenhuan Zhuan* (Qian & Feng, p. 40). Additionally, Baumgarten has investigated into the relationship between visual and verbal information and found that the translations tend to be non-equivalent and use alternative structures. Spoken discourse is explicitly related to physical communicative contexts while the accompanying visual information is still lexically implicit (p. 6).

The studies reviewed above mostly focus on translation strategies for the verbal texts or the cultural level. Although a considerable body of research has been done about translation strategies and effect for a better cross-cultural communication, little attention has been paid to the different kinds and functions of intersemiotic shifts in the subtitle translation affecting by the non-verbal elements.

Therefore, this study is designed to explore different kinds and functions of intersemiotic shifts in the subtitle translation via a multimodal analytical framework combining the non-verbal elements, such as gestures, body movements, tone. The study, by providing empirical evidence, aims to provide more intersemiotic translation of the *Journey to the West*, and specially functions of non-verbal modes for the subtitle translation. Findings of the study can add new insights into translation strategies in the subtitle translation. On the theoretical level, the research can promote the development of multimodal translation study and broaden the research scope of Chinese traditional TV dramas. On the practical level, this study can shed some light on helping readers comprehensively understand TV dramas and providing applicable guidance for the construction of Chinese traditional subtitle translation as well as other multimodal works.

3. A Multimodal Analytical Framework

The research is designed to investigate different kinds of intersemiotic shifts in the subtitle translation of *Journey to the West* and functions of other non-verbal modes. Specifically, the following three questions will be addressed.

(1) What kinds of the intersemiotic shifts could be found in the subtitle translation of *Journey to the West*?

(2) What kinds of reasons cause these intersemiotic shifts to happen?

(3) What functions are the non-verbal modes for the subtitle translation?

The role of language is for the exchange of information (Wang, 2021, p. 43). Non-verbal modes bear part of the responsibility in the subtitle translation. In order to clarify and find out what kinds of intersemiotic shifts happening in the subtitle translation of *Journey to the West*, both verbal modes and non-verbal modes should be considered, and theories from multimodal discourse and translation will be adopted. An intersemiotic shifts model proposed to study the costume drama *Zhenhuan* Zhuan will be accepted and modified (Qian & Feng, p. 20).

In Qian and Feng's model, five kinds of intersemiotic shifts have been identified. However, these five kinds of intersemiotic shifts do not contain all the intersemiotic shifts occurring in the *Journey to the*

West. And according to the data collected and clarified, a modified model is proposed trying to contain all the intersemiotic shifts occurring in the subtitle translation of *Journey to the West.*

In the modified model (See Table 1), six kinds of intersemiotic shifts have been identified. Compared with the model proposed by Qian and Feng aimed at *Zhenhuan* Zhuan, there are three kinds of differences. Firstly, typographic transformation and adding addressing terms are deleted because there are no such examples in the subtitle translation of *Journey to the West*. Instead of changing the typeface, font size or color, double quotation marks are used to show the referenced texts from the speeches from the characters. Secondly, a new type named conversion is added, which means the act of changing the part speech of words or phrases from the ST to TT. Due to the cultural differences, especially the language usage, it is unavoidable to change expressing methods. However, thanks to the para-verbal modes, the meaning contained in the verbal texts of ST can be fully understood by the TT audience. Lastly, substitution is added, which refers to the replacement someone or something with another person or thing. Owing to the images, it will not lead to misunderstanding.

Table 1. Modified Intersemiotic Shifts Model Aimed at *Journey to the West*

Intersemiotic Shifts	Detailed Information
Addition	Adding punctuation marks for the information contained in the para-verbal modes in ST
	Adding punctuation marks to distinguish referenced text from the speeches
Omission	Omitting cultural-loaded words for the information showed by the non-verbal modes in ST
	Omitting addressing terms for the information showed by the non-verbal modes in ST
Omission+	Omitting modal particles and adding punctuation marks in TT
Addition	Omitting modal particles and adding verbal modes to clarify the meaning
	Omitting repetition in ST and adding punctuation marks in TT
Compensation	Using verbal texts to explain the cultural connotations in TT occurring in the verbal or visual modes
	Using IMAGE to compensate the translational cultural loss
Conversion	Changing the part of speech of words or phrases in TT
Substitution	Using someone or something to replace another person or thing in TT

While using this model to analyze the data, the transcription of Taylor will be applied (p. 191). The screenshot and the related background information like plot will be described. Four columns will be listed in sequence. The first column will use numbers to count the images. The second is the

screenshot column. The next column is the detailed information of the image. The fourth column will be used to describe the para-verbal or non-verbal modes in the screenshot. Besides these four columns, the concepts in multimodal discourse analysis will be considered (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 79) to indicate the interpersonal meaning, such as the angle of the shot (high, low, eye-level), the gaze and short-, medium-, or long- shot to show the social distance.

There are twenty-five episodes of *Journey to the West*, ten episodes will be chosen to be analyzed according to the different stages of getting the true scriptures. Episode 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 mainly tell the story of Sun Wukong before meeting his master Xuan Zang. Episode 6, 7, 10, 16 are the typical difficulties they met during the journey. And Episode 25 is last episode for them becoming Buddhas eventually.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Addition

Addition refers to add some signs in the TT, such as images, sounds, and dialogues (Qian & Feng, p. 23). In this study, it mainly refers to the adding of punctuation marks and addressing terms.

On the one hand, there is almost no punctuation marks in the Chinese subtitles, namely ST. In TT, exclamation marks and question marks are often added to intensify the meaning expressed in the ST. For example, in the episode 10, when Black Fox Spirit sees Tang Priest, he says "大喜事大喜事" in Chinese in a raising voice, while in TT it is translated as "Surprise. Surprise!" Here the usage of exclamation marks shows his joyfulness for meeting him. Instead of translating it as "Big surprise, big surprise.", using an exclamation mark, raising voice and facial expressions can help TT audience understand the monster eagerness of long life after eating Tang Priest.

On the other hand, without typographic information, double quotation marks are used to show the referenced texts from the speeches from the characters. However, this kind of intersemiotic shift is rare, only occurring three times in these ten episodes. For instance, in the episode 16, when Tang Monk refused the marriage proposed by the Majesty of Womanland of Western Liang, Pigsy recommends himself saying "我是长得丑了点 可常言说 '粗柳簸箕细柳斗 世上谁嫌男人丑啊'". It is translated "I'm a little ugly, but as the saying goes, 'Thick willow twigs make dustpans There's no man who's really ugly in the world.'"

In Case 1 (See Table 2), an example is analyzed in detail. In the image, The Excellency Tutor is congratulating to Tang Monk for the marriage proposed by the Majesty of Womanland of Western Liang. While saying these words, she is laughing and her voice is raising. She is walking to the seat, preparing to talk more about this good news. They are looking at each other, and the viewer is an onlooker to the plot. Tang Monk is looking at the Excellency Tutor, trying to figure out her message. In this case, the Excellency Tutor is leaning towards the Tang Monk, intensifying that is good news especially to him. Here the exclamation mark is the most suitable way to intensify and convey the feeling of joy from the Excellency Tutor.

Table 2. Transcription in the Episode 16

Image No.	Screenshot	Detailed Information	Para-/Non-verbal Signs	Image Analysis
1		The Excellency Tutor is congratulating to Tang Monk.	She is laughing when saying the words.	They sit face to face, looking at each other rather than the viewer.

4.2 Omission

On the one hand, omitting the cultural-loaded words or phrases, which are hard to be dealt with and understood by the TT audience. Paraphrasing them into TT or adding footnotes seem to be possible ways, but these methods need to occupy too much space and result in long sentences, which is improper for the time and space demands of AVT (Qian & Feng, p. 26). Interestingly, the image and non-verbal modes have solved this problem. For example, in the episode 1, with the noise, Monkey has born and disturbed the Majesty in the heaven. He makes two celestial being to find out the origin of the noise. Two celestial beings says "遵旨" in Chinese, which is simply translated as "Yes." in English subtitle. "遵旨" means "agree with the decree of the emperor", which indicates the power relationship between both sides. It does not be specified only through the "Yes.", but in the image these two have bowed to the Majesty.

On the other hand, omitting the addressing term mostly occurs between the superordinate and the subordinate (p. 28). For example, in the episode 1, when two celestial beings says "臣在" in Chinese, English translation is simply "Here.". In the accompanying image, two are kneeling down while saying the words. Thus, the TT audience can clearly figure the relationship between two sides.

In Case 2 (See Table 3), an example of omission is provided for further demonstration. In the image, The Great White Planet bends his body and says the origin of Monkey to the Majesty, trying to stop the Majesty's plan of conquering the Monkey by force of arms. He comes to the middle of the image with other celestial beings as background. No one looks at viewer and the Great White Planet is placed within the scene in long shot, with some distance to the Majesty. The Majesty cannot be seen clearly in the image. "启奏" here is omitted and it means "an official gives an opinion or reports on a matter to

the emperor". Although this cultural-loaded phrases is omitted, TT audience can know the power relationship from the bending position of the Great White Planet.

Table 3. Transcription in the Episode 2

Image No.	Screenshot	Detailed Information	Para-/Non-verbal Signs	Image Analysis
1		The Great White Planet bends his body and says something to the Majesty.	He sounds humble when saying the words.	Nobody looks at the viewer, which is a scene in long shot.

4.3 Omission+Addition

In Chinese, modal particles always occurring in the conversion, such as "啊" "吧" and "呀". These are unique in Chinese and can rarely find the equivalents in English (p. 29). These modal particles can be interpreted as expressing of emotions, softening the tone or voice, occupying the word round and reminding the listener of the following words (Yang, 2018, p. 76). In the subtitle translation of *Journey to the West*, two ways are adopted when the modal particles are omitted. One is to add the punctuation marks, which occurs more. In the episode 1, when ordinary people see the strange looking of Monkey, they cry out "妖怪呀" in Chinese subtitle, which is translated as "Monster!" in English. With people's facial expression and the action of escaping, here the exclamation mark intensify the fearful feeling of ordinary people. The other way is to add the verbal modes, such as adding adverb or changing the type of sentence. In the episode 5, when Sun Wukong was misunderstood by the Tang Monk, he complains "真是气煞俺也", which is translated as "He really pissed me off". Here the modal particle "也" is omitted, which is also expressed through the adverb "really".

What's more, the third type is omitting repetition in ST and adding punctuation marks in TT. Repetition is always regarded as a kind of rhetorical device of emphasizing a certain theme or emotions through using a word (s) or phrase (s) repeatedly (Zhang, 2013, p. 76). Sometimes, it is flexible to omit the repeating word (s) or phrase (s) and add punctuation marks to make up the meaning. In the episode 10, Pigsy has deluded by the evil spirit to eat lunch. And Sandy has tried to prevent him from being swind. Pigsy says "去去 你 得得得得" in Chinese subtitle, which is translated into "Hush! You! Stop.". In

this subtitle translation, not all the repeating words is translated, but the exclamation marks is used to strengthen the emotions.

Table 4. Transcription in the Episode 5

Image No.	Screenshot	Detailed Information	Para-/Non-verbal Signs	Image Analysis
1		The Bodhisattva Guanyin says something to the Monkey imprisoned under the mountain.	She sounds compassionate when saying the words. She shakes her head slightly.	She looks down at the Monkey. This is a scene in close shot. Two protagonists are in the middle of the image.
2				

In Case 3 (See Table 4), an example of omitting the modal particle and adding verbal modes is analyzed. In the episode 4, when Sun Wukong is imprisoned under the Five Element Mountain for 500 years, the Bodhisattva Guanyin of the Southern Sea shakes her head slightly and says "可怜啊 可怜" with pity in Chinese, which is translated into "What a poor monkey!" in English. Besides adding the exclamation mark, here the sentence type is also changed into emphatic sentence. In the picture, it is a close shot, which strengthens the interaction with the TT audience. And the Bodhisattva Guanyin stands at the peak of the mountain. Therefore, the Monkey needs to look up at her. In the image 2, the foot of the mountain is the major scene, but only the head of Monkey appears outside through a small hole. The contrast not only shows the power distance, but also indicates the poor situation of the Monkey. Accompanying the action in the image and her compassionate tone, this scene expresses the compassion of the Bodhisattva Guanyin.

4.4 Compensation

Based on the above analysis, the meaning of the compensation should be twofold (Qian & Feng, p. 32). On the one hand, using verbal modes to explain ST briefly is considered as a kind of compensation. In the episode 25, Mahakasyapa and Ananda asks for "我们要点人事" before giving the four scriptures. In English, it is translated as "We need some presents". "人事", a special term in Chinese, is related to the relationships among people, so it can be referred to presents. Here the English translation "presents" is based on the verbal modes to explain it.

On the other hand, the accompanying information will make up the the meaning of the translational cultural loss, such as image and non-verbal modes. For instance, in the episode 1, when several celestial beings answers His Majesty about the origin of the noise. In Case 4 (See Table 5), they say "臣等不知" in Chinese, which is translated as "We don't know." in the English subtitle. "臣" is the subordinate in the ancient Chinese hierarchical system, opposite to the emperor. And it includes the power relationship. In the image, when these celestial beings are saying these words, they have bowed to His Majesty and sound humble. This is a scene in long shot, with His Majesty standing in the middle and higher than others, flanked by two rows of celestial beings and two fairy servants. Viewer, as an onlooker to this scene, can see the entire figure in relation to the surroundings. Thus, viewer can easily know the relationships between them although it is only translated as "we" in English.

Table 5. Transcription in the Episode 1

Image No.	Screenshot	Detailed Information	Para-/Non-verbal Signs	Image Analysis
1		Several celestial beings bend their bodies and says something to His Majesty.	They sound humble when saying the words.	Nobody looks at the viewer, which is a scene in long shot.

4.5 Conversion

Due to the different usage of Chinese and English, there are translation examples about changing the part of speech of words or phrases from ST to TT. The part of speech itself is often an obstacle, so translation should not merely focus on the part of speech of the original text (Ye, 2007, p. 52). For example, in the

176

episode 16, the Majesty of Womanland of Western Liang falls in love with Tang Monk and wishes to marry him. Tang Monk refuses her. In his refusal, he says "陛下 贫僧许身佛门 正是为了解救芸芸众生 使世上不再有杀伐战争 使人间不再有怨女旷夫" in Chinese subtitle, which is translated into "... stop the wars and conflicts and prevent men and women from being lonely in the world." in English. In Chinese, "怨女旷夫" is a noun phrase, referring to an adult man or woman without a spouse. In English, a verb phrase "prevent... from" is used to change it into adjective "lonely".

Thus, changing the part of speech is a vital translation technique. Moreover, in the subtitle translation, the image and non-verbal can supplement the meaning. In Case 5 (See Table 6), there is an example of conversion. Sun Wukong wants to protect Tang Monk from being attacked by the evil spirits when he finds food for them. He besieges them in a circle. However, Pigsy complains "这猴子可真会捣鬼 画个圈叫我们钻", which is translated as "What a naughty monkey! He besieges us in a circle." in English subtitle. In the image, it is a scene in short shot, and Pigsy is in the central of the image. The point of view is horizontal and frontal angle. He is laughing when he says the words. "捣鬼" means use subterfuge and intrigue, which tends to be a pejorative term. But in this scene, it tends to be neutral. Pigsy laughs at this action and believes it is unnecessary. "捣鬼" is a verbal phrase in Chinese, but here the "naught" is a noun, a neutral word.

Table 6. Transcription in the Episode 10

Image No.	Screenshot	Detailed Information	Para-/Non-verbal Signs	Image Analysis
1		Pigsy complains about Sun Wukong's action.	He laughs when he is saying the words.	The point of view is horizontal and frontal angle.

4.6 Substitution

There are the least translational examples involving the substitution in the study. Substitution means to use someone or something to replace another person or thing in TT. Substitution is an effective means to improve textual cohesion and coherence and is often used to achieve the natural fluency of the translation (Wang et al., 2019, p. 161).

A detailed analysis is offered in Case 6 (See Table 7). In the episode 16, "脂粉裙钗" in Chinese are all the things used by the women. So it is translated as "All of them are women." in English. Sun

177

Wukong's gesture has indicated the place here is Womanland, and there are only women. Thus, it can be translated briefly without translating the thing one by one.

Table 7. Transcription in the Episode 16

Image No.	Screenshot	Detailed Information	Para-/Non-verbal Signs	Image Analysis
1		Sun Wukong is talking about why he could not kill the women in the Womanland like killing the evil spirits.	Pigsy laughs. Sun Wukong points out his hands to indicate the place.	Sandy looks at the viewer. Pigsy looks at Sun Wukong.

5. Conclusion

This study has six kinds of intersemiotic shifts during the subtitle translation in the *Journey to the West*. Data sources include all the subtitle translation in ten episodes chosen from this TV drama.

The data acquired have been analyzed through an in-depth qualitative analysis of typical translation examples via a multimodal framework, findings supplement that image and para-/non-verbal modes are significant for making up the meaning in the verbal modes.

There exist some limitations of the study. First, this study has relied a lot on the multimodal semiotic resources. This way of analysis is quite subjective and static. Second, this study has focused on the subtitle translation without making mention of audience's reception. Finally, more para-/non-verbal modes can be further analyzed, such as the speed of speaking. Perhaps future study can explore more on these perspectives.

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