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The Application of Catford's Translation Shifts Theory in Subtitle Translation of The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics

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Abstract

Since the new era, China has attached great importance to promoting fine traditional Chinese culture, embodying strong cultural confidence. Disseminating such culture effectively presents both opportunities and challenges. The documentary China in the Classics interprets ancient classics to showcase Chinese civilization, among which its Songs of Chu episode artistically reproduces Qu Yuan's patriotism with distinctive cultural charm. This thesis adopts Catford's Translation Shifts Theory to analyze the subtitle translation of this episode. It examines how level shifts adjust grammar and diction to conform to English norms while preserving original meaning, and how category shifts tackle culture-loaded words and conversational lines for successful cultural communication. The analysis offers references for documentary subtitle translation, improving translation quality and facilitating the international spread of Chinese culture.

Keywords

Catford's Translation Shifts Theory; China in the Classics; Songs of Chu; level shifts; category shifts.

1. Introduction

With the increasing development of science and technology, exchanges among countries around the world have become more frequent. Cultural programs serve as one of the significant means of cultural dissemination in maintaining a high level of cultural output. To engage international audiences actively in the content, it is imperative to provide high-quality and authentic subtitle translations. Thus, translators should constantly strive to explore and even update suitable translation theories for Chinese-English translation, aiming for more excellent cultural output.

1.1. Significance Review

In today's increasingly globalized world, cultural exchange and mutual understanding have become crucial bridges for promoting cooperation and understanding between different countries and ethnicity. As a country with a long history and splendid culture, the dissemination of Chinese classics abroad is particularly significant. The TV program China in the Classics serves as a platform to promote China's outstanding traditional culture, and its *Chu Ci* episode especially presents the unique charm of ancient Chinese literature. However, translation of subtitles in Chinese cultural programs into English comes with many challenges. Chinese culture is extensive and profound, so even Chinese people who grow up with it only know a little about its 5,000-year history. Thus, for foreign viewers who know little about China, subtitle translators need to use smart strategies to make sure international audience really understand and feel the special charm of Chinese culture. This involves not just about languages, but also about building a bridge between two cultures and offering a new way to see things. In this process, the application of Catford's Translation Shift Theory in Chinese-English subtitle translation is of utmost importance.

ISSN: 2710-0170

Catford's Translation Shift Theory provides a solid theoretical foundation for the Chinese-English subtitle translation of the *Chu Ci* episode in that it contributes to improving the accuracy and fluency of Chinese-English subtitle translation. In the Chinese-English subtitle translation of the *Chu Ci* episode, translators often face challenges such as complex sentence structures, rich cultural elements, and allusions. By applying Catford's Translation Shift Theory, translators can conduct in-depth analysis of the source text, understand its linguistic structure and cultural connotations, and make appropriate shifts and adjustments in the target text, which help eliminate differences between the source text and the target text, making the translation better adapted to English expression habits and improving its accuracy and fluency.

1.2. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis contains five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which mainly introduces the significance and structure of the paper. The second chapter is a theoretical overview, which introduces Catford's Translation and Transition theory in detail containing level shifts and category shifts. The third chapter introduces studies on *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics* and its subtitle translation. This section gives a brief introduction of China in the Classics, the significance of *Songs of Chu* and features of subtitle translation of this program and applicability of the Catford's Translation Shift Theory in the Chinese-English subtitle translation of this program. The fourth chapter is the main part of the paper. From the perspective of this theory, the specific application of Catford's Translation Shifts Theory in Chinese-English subtitle translation of this program is illustrated, which demonstrates how shifts have been effectively made in the promotion of Chinese culture through the program. Chapter five is the conclusion. Through the application of Catford's translation theory in English subtitle translation, it is intended to summarize the methods and techniques of subtitle translation for reference of other translators in the future, so as to make more people feel the charm of ancient books and records in translation, spread Chinese culture, and promote the cultural exchanges of different countries.

2. Overview of Catford's Translation Shifts Theory

J. C. Catford, a famous British linguist and translation theorist, was born on 26 March 1917 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Catford's research has provided the translation community with new practical guidance, and has made an important contribution to promoting the development of the translation discipline. His Translation Shifts Theory is divided into two parts: level shifts and category shifts[4].

2.1. Level Shifts

Level shifts refer to shifts that occur when an item at one linguistic level in the source language has a translation equivalent at a different level in the target language[5]. Levels include grammar, vocabulary, phonology and morphology. However, the only possible shift is between the levels of grammar and vocabulary in practical translation, whether in the translation of ancient classic texts or of everyday conversations in modern China. That is, the translator finds equivalents in grammar and vocabulary to achieve accurate semantic expression. There are many differences in grammar and vocabulary between Chinese and English. Chinese is a language of parataxis. On the contrary, English is a language of hypotaxis, and it usually expresses sense of time through tenses. Therefore, the translator should use appropriate target grammar and vocabulary to express the source language in translation.

The application of level shifts in subtitle translation of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics* is made mostly in the shifts of tense and aspect. In Chinese, especially ancient Chinese,there are many literary expressions. Time or state is implied in many of them, while in English the information is always shown obviously by grammar. Thus when translating from

ISSN: 2710-0170

Chinese into English, the shift from vocabulary to grammar is usually made to convey tense in this way. This thesis researches shifts from vocabulary to grammar through examples of tense and aspect in subtitle translation of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics*.

2.2. Category Shifts

Category shifts involve shifts that occur within the same level of language, such as shifts in structure, class, unit, and intra-system[6]. English and Chinese have quite different structures. In order to convey the content of the original text, the form of the translation often needs to be adjusted accordingly. Especially in subtitle translation, the length of the sentence and the number of words are all limited. Therefore, according to the Translation Shift Theory, translators can carry out translation shifts without being limited by the form during the translation process. Adopting Firth and Halliday's model of "scale" (sentence, clause, group, word, morpheme, etc.), category shift is defined as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the source language to the target language, which involve shifts in the rank of linguistic units." The so-called category refers to the grammatical part of speech and various changes in gender, number, case, aspect, person, tense, mood, modality, etc. Among them, part of speech is called the "basic grammatical category"; changes in tense, case, modality, etc. are called "subordinate grammatical categories"; subject, predicate, object, etc. are called "functional grammatical categories." Based on this, category shifts are further divided into structure-shifts, class-shifts, unit-shifts, and intra-system shifts[1].

Structural shifts refer to the changes in linguistic structure that occur on the same grammatical level during the translation process. They can happen at all levels and are the most common category shifts in translation. Common structural shifts include: shifts between active and passive voices; shifts between affirmative and negative structures; shifts between subject-prominent English sentences and topic-prominent Chinese sentences, etc. Due to the differences in expression habits between Chinese and English, and the fact that ancient Chinese expressions are more complex compared to modern Chinese, with sentence components and their order being significantly different from English, structural shifts are more frequently used in the translation of classical texts. To enhance the sense of engagement for international audiences when watching this program, many Chinese sentences undergo careful adjustments and transformations in their components and structures during English translation. These shifts not only make the language conversion more consistent with English expression habits but also help audiences to immerse themselves in the context of the program more effectively, thereby improving their viewing experience and cultural resonance.

Class shifts refer to the shifts between different classes of linguistic elements, i.e. the translation equivalents of the target language units and the source language units belong to different categories. In translation practice, class shifts mostly take place at the lexical level. This refers to the shifts between parts of speech in English and Chinese, such as shifts between verbs and nouns, adjectives and verbs, prepositions and verbs, etc. Chinese sentences often flow like a stream, focusing on the integration of meaning, and it is grammatically acceptable in Chinese to have multiple verbs in a single sentence. However, English sentences are structured around form, requiring each sentence to have complete components and only one main verb. For example, in one Chinese sentence "臣等推举上官大夫之子担任三闾大夫" which contains two verbs, it is not allowed in English. Here, when such sentences are to be translated into English, lexical shifts can be used.

Unit shifts refer to the translation of a linguistic unit of a certain level in the source language into a linguistic unit of a different level in the target language. The grammatical levels in English include morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, while the grammatical levels in Chinese are somewhat different, including morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and sentence groups. It can be said that the shifts between different grammatical units in English

ISSN: 2710-0170

and Chinese are unit shifts. In English, phrases are frequently used, while Chinese often employs verbs or other words as substitutes. In the subtitle of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics*, there are many concise Chinese characters with rich implications. To convey its rich emotional hues appropriately or to express the original meaning more specifically in English, it is necessary to shift from single word to a phrase or even to a complete sentence.

The shifts from five aspects including tense shifts, aspect shifts, structural shifts, class shifts and unit shifts according to Catford's Translation Shift Theory are vital to subtitle translation of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics* in overcoming the differences between the two languages and promoting Chinese culture.

3. Studies on The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics and its Subtitle Translation

China in the Classics is an outstanding program that not only enriches the audience's entertainment life but also serves as a bridge to convey the essence of Chinese culture to the world. In this process, the translation of subtitles is especially crucial, which is the link that ensures smooth cross-cultural communication. The content of the program includes not only dialogues in modern Chinese but also ancient Chinese dialogues, sometimes with famous sayings from the classics. The integration of these elements undoubtedly brings greater challenges to the translation work, requiring translators to not only be proficient in the evolution of language but also to have a deep understanding of cultural connotations in order to accurately and vividly present the essence of the program to the global audience.

3.1. Brief Introduction of The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics

China in the Classics focuses on the outstanding cultural classics of China, with a selection of the worthiest traditional cultural works. Through a combination of "cultural programs + drama + television", it narrates the creation of the classics, their core ideas, and the shining stories that have been passed down. This approach brings the written words in the classics to "life", showcasing Chinese wisdom, spirit, and values contained within them.

Songs of Chu, also known as *Chu Ci*, is a collection of romantic poetry that originated in the Chu Kingdom during the Warring States period in ancient China. It is considered the first romantic poetry anthology in Chinese literary history, following the more realistic-oriented Book of Songs (*Shi Jing*)[8]. The program is deeply rooted in the rich soil of *Chu Ci*, beginning with their childhood separately in dialogues between Nan Rendong and Qu Yuan, showcasing Chinese boundless curiosity and spirit of exploration towards the universe since ancient times. Under the guidance of host Sa Beining, the audience will set off from the celebration of the modern Dragon Boat Festival, traverse the tunnel of time and space, and arrive at the land where Qu Yuan and Song Yu lived during the Warring States period. Through dialogues between descendants and ancestors, the program leads the audience deep into the long river of history and into the magnificent world of *Chu Ci*.

Catford's Translation Shifts Theory is not bound to literal word-for-word rendering but is guided by a more adaptable methodology, offering a flexible framework for the study of translating flexible texts. This theory emphasizes a deep understanding of the characteristics of both the source and target languages during the translation process, making appropriate adjustments to the translation to cater to the cultural and aesthetic norms of the target language, while staying true to the spirit of the original work. In this way, Catford's theory can provide flexible means in helping achieve fluency and accuracy in the English translation of subtitle of the Chinese classic, thus allowing foreign audience to better appreciate the unique charm of this monumental work of classical literature.

ISSN: 2710-0170

3.2. Features of Subtitle Translation of The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics

China in the Classics ingeniously adopts the form of dialogue at ancient and modern times, which requires subtitle translation to be faithful to the charm of ancient Chinese while ensuring that modern audience can easily understand[9]. Given the cultural differences between the East and the West, many Western audiences are not familiar with Chinese classical figures and historical events. Therefore, in subtitle translation, the transformation of tense is particularly crucial. Chinese expressions often do not indicate time evidently, while tense is an important part of sentence structure in English. As far as the difference is concerned, the concept of level shift in Catford's Translation Shifts Theory provides us with a useful explanation for the transformation from Chinese vocabulary to English grammar in terms of tense. Through this transformation, translators can more accurately convey the intent of the original text, while enabling audience of the target language to better understand and feel the content of the program.

The program is renowned for its rapid scene changes and rich emotional expressions. Subtitle translation is not only about ensuring the accurate conveyance of meanings of words in dialogue but also about capturing and conveying the corresponding emotions and tones to enhance the international audience's sense of immersion and emotional resonance. Meticulously designed subtitles can help viewers overcome language barriers to deeply experience every joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness in the program, as if they were present at the scene, breathing and sharing the fate with the characters. Guided by Catford's Translation Shifts Theory, the cultural and environmental differences between the East and West can be bridged through skillful shifts, such as dealing with the differences in how people are addressed or the ways of greeting each other between the East and West. Such shifts not only enable translation to be faithful to the original text but also fit well with the cultural environment of the target language, enhancing the naturalness and acceptability of the translation.

Modern Chinese and English have significant differences, and the dialogues of ancient people in the program are imbued with a rich cultural atmosphere. Under such circumstances, subtitle translation should not only be concise and clear but also ensure that international audiences can easily understand. Various translation strategies mentioned in Catford's Translation Shifts Theory can be cleverly applied to this process to address the challenges posed by linguistic and cultural differences, helping foreign audience to better understand and experience Chinese culture.

4. Specific Application of Catford's Shifts Theory in Subtitle Translation of The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics Translation

This chapter primarily illustrates the applicability and practicality of Catford's Translation Shifts Theory in the subtitle translation of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics* through examples, which are conducted from two major aspects: level shifts and category shifts, with each major aspect further divided into many smaller points for detailed explanation. The shifts are made so as to be in conformity of language habits and cultural acceptance in English translation due to the differences in the two languages and cultures involved.

4.1. Case-based Analysis of the Application of Level Shifts in Subtitle Translation of The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics

Due to the profound influence of Latin and Greek grammar, research in English grammar has long combined "tense" and "aspect" into a single term, "tense and aspect". However, in many languages, "tense" and "aspect" exist separately[2]. The shifts in these aspects should be made with regard to the linguistic and cultural contexts.

ISSN: 2710-0170

4.1.1. Tense shifts

The use of "tense" reflects level shifts very well. English has past tense, present tense, future tense, etc., which belong to the grammatical category, while Chinese does not have corresponding concepts, but expresses similar meanings through vocabulary indicating time. Thus the shifts must be made based on the context of the original text and the circumstances so that meanings can be shown to the English readers accurately and clearly. In the subtitle translation of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics*, many lines are about Qu Yuan reminiscing about his childhood, as well as scenes where Qu Yuan and the King express their patriotism by stating they will never leave their homeland and their beautiful longing for the future.

Example 1:禀受天命不离故土,永世扎根在楚国的土地。

Translation: They will be deeply rooted in the land of Chu.

In Example 1, the term "永世" is used in the original text to express the firm determination of the orange trees in Chu State to remain rooted in their homeland forever, while in the translation,the simple future tense is employed to indicate the certainty of this event, achieving a shift from lexis to grammar to fit into the English sentence structure for the meaning of the future. This shift can be made because expressions to show tense are different between Chinese and English.

Example 2:你说他爱不爱看星星?

Translation: Tell me, did he like looking at the stars?

This sentence is a question from the childhood Nan Rendong to his adult self, where "he" refers to Qu Yuan, an ancient patriotic poet and politician, whom Nan Rendong admired most. In Chinese, Qu Yuan is a well-known historical figure, so there is no need to say that he is not in the modern times. However, in English, tense usage is very strict, so the simple past tense is used here to convey the concept of the past as implied in Chinese, thus the shift is made due to the different cultural backgrounds between the two languages.

In Chinese, many lines have various words to imply tense, but in the translation into English, grammatical methods are used to express tense. Therefore, the level shifts from words to grammars within Catford's Translation Shifts Theory are widely applied in this translation because of different cultural background or native expressions between Chinese and English.

4.1.2. Aspect shifts

In English, the concept of "aspect" includes perfect aspect and progressive aspect, which also belongs to the grammatical category. However, Chinese does not have a corresponding grammatical concept, but the meaning may be expressed in words or implied in logical relations.

Example 3:但在这十年间,大王未能收复商於之地。

Translation: But the king hadn't retrieved Shangwu.

In Example 3, the phrase"十年" indicates that "大王"has not been able to fulfill the wish of the State of Chu for the past decade and now has no chance to do so, so the meaning of the past perfect tense is implied in the original Chinese, while in the translation the past perfect tense "had done" is used directly to represent the time span. Therefore, the transformation between vocabulary and grammar occurs in Chinese-English translation. English often uses "have done" to express the present perfect aspect, while Chinese often uses words or phrases like "已经"and "截止到" to express the result or the impact of past actions on the present. This shift is made due to different usages of time between Chinese and English.

Example 4:我读过《楚辞》,我喜欢里面的一句话:路漫漫其修远兮,吾将上下而求索。

ISSN: 2710-0170

Translation: I have read *Songs of Chu*, and I like one of the stanzas: The way was long, and wrapped in gloom did seem, as I urged on to seek my vanished dream.

In example 4, "have read" is the present perfect, which means that this thing has been done already. But in Chinese, the tense can't be shown by such a grammatical category. Therefore, many words are used to present the tense of the sentence. Here, the translation uses "过" in Chinese, showing that something has been done already. Additionally, "了" is also the most commonly used particle in Chinese to indicate the completion of an action. For example, "我吃了饭" means "I have eaten", signifying that the action of eating is completed. Although some Chinese words and phrases can convey that an action or event has been completed, they are not strictly "tense" markers but rely more on context and situation to be understood.

Tense and aspect are unique grammatical categories which have no correspondence in Chinese, thus the shift is a necessity in linguistic shift from Chinese into English.

4.2. Case-based Analysis of the Application of Category Shifts in Subtitle Translation of The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics

In *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics*, there are many daily conversations which are brief and colloquial in Chinese. However, due to different culture, backgrounds and lifestyles, the means of expression are various. Category shifts involve the shifts in structure, class and unit, etc. and focus on the similarities and differences in the expression of a particular element in Chinese and English sentences, which can solve many problems in daily conversation and the translation of ancient texts. The shifts of these aspects should pay attention to the different native expressions between Chinese and English.

4.2.1. Structural shifts

The composition and order of Chinese and English sentences are different. Therefore, translation from Chinese to English requires translators to achieve structural transformation as much as possible in order to find a more appropriate expression for native English speakers.

(1)Affirmation-Negation

Example 5:我楚国不可不慎啊!

Translation: We should be more than careful!

In Example 5,"不可不" is a double negation which is frequently used in Chinese to strengthen the tone. However, when translating it into English, the translator converts it into an affirmative expression, namely "be more than," achieving a transition from a negative structure to an affirmative one. Therefore, the original text and the translation are not limited to formal equivalence, but rather achieve equivalence in meaning. This shift can be made because that double negation in Chinese means affirmation, while there is no such usage in English. However, the conversion between "affirmative and negative" is not always necessary in the translation process. In some cases, the translator can produce a qualified translation regardless of whether such a conversion is made. The translator has a certain degree of freedom and can choose whether to convert between affirmation and negation based on factors such as language style, language structure, and tone.

Example 6:这不是撒老师吗?

Translation: You are Mr. Sa!

The example sentence is a greeting from the fruit shop owner to the host, Sa Beining, when he comes to buy fruits. In Chinese, sometimes a negative expression is used to convey surprise, and although it is phrased as a question, it is merely a polite form of greeting, roughly meaning "Mr. Sa comes to shop", rather than inquiring about something specific. In the English translation, the negative interrogative sentence is converted into an exclamatory declarative sentence, emphasizing the focus of the Chinese language, that it is "Mr. Sa" who has come to

ISSN: 2710-0170

shop, not someone else. This transformation of sentence patterns in category shifts allows for the expression of the shop owner's surprise and delight at encountering a public figure shopping and it is made due to the differences of daily conversations between Chinese and English.

(2)Active-Passive

Because of the different ways of thinking in Chinese and English, the passive-active expression of words in sentences are also different.

Example 7:所以后人称宋玉叫"千古悲秋之祖"。

Translation: So, Song Yu was later named the Master of Sorrowful Autumns.

In the above example sentence, "称宋玉叫" is in the active voice in Chinese, while "was named" is in the passive voice, reflecting the "active-passive" transformation within the category shift. Passive voice is a common grammatical phenomenon in English. However, it is rarely seen in Chinese, and the word "被" is often used in conjunction with words with negative meanings, such as "被捕" (to be arrested) and "被害" (to be victimized). The passive voice in English is due to factors such as topic establishment, textual coherence, politeness principles, sentence structure, and objective expression[3]. Therefore, this shift is made because of the different culture between China and English countries.

Example 8:从《天问》到《离骚》,屈原的这种求索精神贯穿在《楚辞》里。

Translation:From Heavenly Questions to Encountering Sorrow, Qu Yuan's determination to explore can be seen throughout Songs of Chu.

In example 8, translating the Chinese word "贯穿" as "can be seen" and rendering the active form in Chinese into the passive voice in English exemplifies the subject-object shift within category shifts. In an English sentence, there must be a subject and a verb which requires the translator to choose one from many of them. Therefore, the subject-object shift is made here. Sometimes, the translator needs to respect the English expression habits and convert some active voices in the original text into passive forms.

It is the different expressing habits that make the shift from active to passive when translating Chinese to English.

(3)Declarative Sentence-Interrogative Sentence

Example 9:这样吧两位先生。

Translation: How about this?

This example sentence is a spoken dialogue rather than an official article, so it cannot be rigidly translated word for word. Instead, the expression habits of native speakers to make it colloquial should be considered. By combining the context, a declarative sentence can be translated in Chinese into an interrogative sentence, achieving the transformation of different sentence types in category shifts.

Example 10:老板!

Translation: Anyone here?

In this example, the host, Sa Beining is inquiring if the shopkeeper is present at the stall. In everyday Chinese conversation, an exclamatory sentence can be used to amplify the voice to call the shopkeeper, but in English, it is more common to use an interrogative sentence to ask if the shopkeeper is there. Here, converting the Chinese exclamatory sentence into an English interrogative sentence achieves a transformation between different sentence types within category shifts. This shift can be made because of different communication skills between Chinese and English.

(4)Shifts of sentence components and order

ISSN: 2710-0170

Example 11:屈原在楚国败落之际自沉于汨罗江以身殉国。

Translation: Qu Yuan committed suicide at Miluo River on the verge of Chu's collapse.

The original text first mentions the time "楚国败落之际" and the location "汨罗江", followed by the narrative of "以身殉国". However, in the translation, the narrative is placed first, followed by the secondary information, which aligns more closely with the reading habits of native English speakers and realizes the transformation of different sentence elements and sequences in categorical shifts.

Example 12:关于端午节由来的说法很多。

Translation: There are many sayings about the origin of the Dragon Boat Festival.

In the example mentioned above, the translation uses the "There be"construction, placing the word "saying" at the beginning to highlight the main information, and the postpositive attributive "about the origin of the Dragon Boat Festival" to achieve the postposition of modifiers, thus avoiding a top-heavy sentence structure. By converting the elements and order of the sentence, a structural shift is realized.

In English, important information tends to be placed in the front, followed by the secondary information. Expressions of attitude or opinions are often stated first, serving as a "general summary" (such as personal feelings, conclusions, or inferences about events). These expressions of attitude are usually short, and then the details of the event are described, which tend to be longer. In contrast, in Chinese, the narrative precedes the summary and attitude, the main information coming later. The narrative is usually very long, while the summary and attitude is brief. Therefore, the focus of information in English and Chinese often differs, and during translation, the focus of information often needs to be adjusted accordingly. This is a reflection of the difference in thinking styles between Westerners who tend to be more direct and Chinese people who prefer to be more implicit. The classical work is typical of the ways in Chinese expressions thus these shifts are often made in the translation of the classical work.

Many differences in ways of thinking between the East and West lead to distinct characteristics in the use of sentence patterns, active and passive voices, and the order of sentence elements and so on. According to Catford's Translation Shifts Theory these linguistic features can be transformed properly to achieve an idiomatic expression that fits the target language environment[7]. Through such shifts, the translation not only remains faithful to the intent and style of the original text but also conforms to the expectations and habits of the target language users, facilitating smooth and natural cross-cultural communication.

4.2.2. Class shifts

In numerous translation practices, translators often find that if the same part of speech is used in the target language, it is very likely to lead to difficulties in the choice or structure in the target language to express the meaning of the source text accurately and clearly. Therefore, it is necessary to convert word classes to achieve a translation that can match the source text, convey the deep semantic information of words or phrases, and achieve the same effect as the source text. Catford believes that class shifts occur when the translation equivalent of a target language item belongs to a different class from the source language item.

Example 13:臣等推举上官大夫之子担任三闾大夫。

Translation: We recommend Advisor Shangguan's son as the Minister of Rituals.

Due to the flexible use of verbs and the diverse sentence structures in Chinese, verbs are used more frequently in Chinese sentences compared to English. As a result, multiple verbs often appear in a single sentence, whereas English sentences have a stronger overall coherence, allowing for only one main verb per sentence. In this example, "举荐"(to recommend or to nominate) is a main verb in the Chinese sentence, which is translated as a verb in English, while

ISSN: 2710-0170

a preposition for“担任”(to hold a position or to serve as) is used to conform to English grammar, thus a component shift occurs within category shifts because there is only one verb in one English sentence while verbs are multiple in a Chinese sentence.

Example 14:与日月兮同光。

Translation: I compete with the sun and moon in brilliance.

The meaning of this sentence is that one wished that his value in the world can shine like the sun and moon. The original expresses the author’s determination to do something immortal. When translating “同” in Chinese, the verb “compete” is used here, instead of the world “same” or “similar”. The word “compete” not only acts as a predicate verb in the English sentence, but also more closely expresses the poet’s ambition and determination, and in conveying the subtle meaning in the original, this shift is made properly to achieve the emphatic sense.

There are differences in thinking patterns, language habits, and expression methods between China and the West. English uses concise and compact vocabulary, while Chinese is relatively implicit and complex. Therefore, it is common to find situations where words are not completely equivalent in translation. In such cases, it is necessary to use word class conversion techniques to translate vocabulary, so that the original meaning can be faithfully conveyed in the target language. Only when the linguistic content of the source text is accurately translated can the corresponding style be rendered.

4.2.3. Unit shifts

Since prepositions in English sentences are numerous and very active， prepositions also have the function of verbs, and English is called “prepositional” language by some linguists[10]. In contrast, Chinese prepositions are not only few in number. English prepositional phrases they are translated into verbs, phrases or short sentences

Example 15:这一点也让我们非常动容,所以总导演带着导演组以屈原起伏跌宕的一生为主线,歌颂屈原炽热的家国情怀和敢于发问的求索精神。

Translation:We were very touched so our producer team under the leadership of our director use the ups and downs of Qu Yuan’s life to praise Qu Yuan’s passion for his country and his daring pursuit of knowledge.

Therefore, the translation of“带着” as “under the leadership of” in the example sentence is more in line with the expression habits of English, resulting in the category shifts of a verb into a prepositional phrase, which is due to the different preference for use of parts of speech between Chinese and English.

Example 16:大王让屈原制定新法, 他逢人便讲“除了我没有人能够起草得了”。这不明明和大王争功吗?而且他在推行新法的过程中遇到贵族有意见,他又把责任推给了大王。像这种揽功推过必然招致大家的不满。

Translation: You let Qu Yuan make new laws and regulations and he always said, “I'm the only one capable of drafting new laws”. He is clearly trying to steal your contributions. And he always shifted the blame to you whenever an aristocrat was against it. His manner will definitely breed resentment.

In this example, “揽功推过” in Chinese is the opposite of an idiom “推功揽过”(to decline a reward for merit but take the responsibility on oneself), which is a conclusion of “Qu Yuan’s bad actions” according to the traitor minister. The phrase is translated into the word of “manner” to refer to what is said above, which also conveys the original phrase meaning concisely in the context. Therefore, a shift from a phrase to a word is made flexibly to make up for the lack of the equivalent form in English.

ISSN: 2710-0170

Example 17:大王,如果贵族因为怨恨屈原转而怨恨大王,那我楚国危矣。

Translation: Your Majesty, if the aristocrats have a grudge against you because of him, the State of Chu would be very dangerous!

In the above example, the meaning of the verb "怨恨"in Chinese is found to be expressed by the use of a noun "a grudge" in English. This shift is made due to different language features. Chinese is a dynamic language, while English is a static language. Therefore, changing the verb form of the word into a more static form will be more in line with the foreign expression. This transformation not only ensures that the translated text adheres to English grammatical and structural conventions, but also facilitates a more natural and fluent expression of the original meaning.

By making use of the context and flexible ways of expressions, various shifts can be made from Chinese into English, and they result in natural and smooth expressions in the translation.

5. Conclusion

Guided by Catford's translation shift theory, this thesis analyzes the English subtitle translation of *The Episode of Songs of Chu of China in the Classics* from two aspects: level shifts and category shifts. The author thoroughly discusses tense shifts and aspect shifts within level shifts, and clarifies the differences in tense expression between English and Chinese, as well as methods for more idiomatic expression. Through the exploration of category shifts, the thesis demonstrates that despite the different growth environments and ways of thinking between the East and West, one can still translate more idiomatically by skillfully applying shifts. The analysis also reveals that the translation methods and skills are worthy of reference in the process of subtitle translation. Compared to previous studies, this study presents the applicability and probability of Catford's Translation Shifts Theory in daily conversations and also ancient Chinese classics. Translators can utilize this theory to handle dialogues and ancient Chinese translations from a micro perspective, improving the quality of the translations and promoting the spread of Chinese culture. However, the theory also exhibits limitations, particularly in its inability to fully capture the complexities of cultural and contextual nuances in subtitle translation. To address these limitations, future research can explore how Catford's theory may be supplemented by other frameworks that emphasize cultural and contextual factors.

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