

On C-E Translation Strategies of Corporate Publicizing Video Based on Variational Translation Theory: A Communication Science Perspective

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Abstract

Corporate publicizing video has been widely used in international publicity and image building. Against this background, its translation quality becomes increasingly crucial. According to communication science theory, translation quality depends on whether a good communication effect can be achieved and a corporate image can be built. However, Chinese corporate publicizing video is characteristic of culture-loaded words, novel metaphors, and abstract expressions, which seriously interfere with the communication effect. To deal with these issues, the author combines communication science and variational translation theory to study the subtitle translation of Chinese corporate publicizing videos. It is found that noise and communication load control serve as standards for the translation of Chinese corporate publicizing videos, and they provide macro guidance for specific variational translation methods, including rewriting, adding, editing, and deletion, thus ensuring corporate publicizing videos meet the goal of publicity.

Key Words: Corporate Publicizing Video; Audio-visual Translation; Communication Science; Variational Translation Theory

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen the fast development of China’s foreign trade. According to *White Paper on Chinese Enterprises Going Global*, which was published by LinkedIn on November 29th, 2022, the globalization of Chinese enterprises has moved from “product internationalization” and “capital internationalization” to a new stage of “capability internationalization”. Against this background, the communication effect becomes increasingly crucial for companies to achieve the goal of “going out from China to the target market” to “going into the target market”.

To go into the target market, corporate publicizing video is a perfect choice. It serves as a window for customers to learn the information and values of the enterprise and it is usually published on businesses' websites or distributed through their social media channels. Publicizing video is often used for international publicity, and to change the attitudes and thinking of the target audience (Bittner, 1986, p.50). In recent years, the translation quality of corporate publicizing videos has been greatly improved, but the problem of ignoring target-language culture, the needs of consumers, and being overly faithful to the original text still exists. Suitable translation facilitates communication, while bad translation causes barriers and even tarnishes the company's image. As a result, its translation quality has a direct influence on economic benefits and it is urgent to study translation methods and standards for better corporate publicity effect.

When it comes to the translation of corporate publicizing videos, it is faced with a debate between complete translation and variational translation. In this study, the author combines communication science and variational translation theory, aiming to study the subtitle translation strategies of Chinese corporate publicizing videos.

2. Previous studies on the translation of corporate publicizing video

Based on its purpose, publicizing video can be divided mainly into corporate publicizing video, political publicizing video, travel publicizing video, city publicizing video, and educational publicizing video (Guo and Wu, 2011). Different from traditional written text, it is a type of film in which information can be transmitted through different modes. This information is purposefully selected to influence the cognition of the target audience. Multi-modal feature of corporate publicizing video is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the same information can be transmitted through multiple channels, including pictures, sound, and text. Different modes cooperate to convey meaning, so the target consumer can receive more information

in a unit of time. On the other hand, how to restore the relationship between different modes of translation remains unsolved, presenting more challenges to the translator. If the subtitling translation can not be coordinated with other modes, it would fail to convey the original information and even confuse target consumers, influencing economic benefits.

The translation of corporate publicizing video falls into audio-visual translation, which originated in film translation, expanded into screen translation, and eventually matured into audiovisual translation (Liu, 2010). We are familiar with Jakobson's translation categories: intralingual translation, interlingual translation, and semiotic translation, on which multi-modal features are first shed light (Jakobson, 1959). However, audio-visual translation does not gain enough attention until Pérez-González (2014, p. 98) publishes *Audiovisual Translation: Theories, methods, and Issues: Routledge*, in which he points out that most of the audio-visual translation lacks research on the interaction between written words and visual information, namely resource integration. It is worth noting that resource integration among different modes is not easy due to different semiotic characteristics.

In the translation of the corporate publicizing video, the main research objective is the interlingual subtitle, which is the information presented in a film in a different language. It is usually in the form of one or more lines of text and is in sync with the original verbal information (Gottlieb, cited in Orero, 2004, p.86). The interlingual subtitle is usually placed at the bottom of the screen with limited space and time. For space constraints, both the subtitle and its transition should not occupy more than two lines or 35 characters (Baker, 2001, p. 245). As a result, subtitle translation must be concise and clear as much as possible. For time constraints, the length of subtitles should conform to people's normal reading time (Cintas and Anderman, 2009, p. 22). Subtitling translation is widely used in audio-visual communication such as film and television (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 2014, p. 161). It is a kind of "constrained translation", which means that audio-visual translation relies on the relationship between linguistic messages and information carried by non-linguistic systems (Mayoral, Kelly, and Gallardo, 1988, p. 356).

Recent years have seen scholars make tremendous achievements in quality control and translation methods of subtitling translation, such as condensation, reductive paraphrasing, and deletion (Li, 2001). Several theories have also been applied to solve translation difficulties concerned with subtitle features and cultural differences. But the application of variational translation theory to publicizing video is still an area that is largely ignored. The study of variation in linguistics mainly reveals the relationship between language variation and society (Lu and Zhang, 2020). In different societies, variation plays a significant role in good international publicity.

The corporate publicizing video has made an indelible contribution to helping Chinese products and culture enter overseas markets. However, Chinese audiovisual products have limited influence on the international stage. Through the literature review, it is found that the intervention and integration of different modes have gradually become a hot and difficult topic in subtitling translation, and the choice of complete translation and variational translation remains controversial.

3. Applicability of Communication Science and Variational Translation Theory to Publicizing Video Translation.

Variational translation theory mainly arises from Yan Fu's adaptation techniques in the translation of *Evolution and Ethics* (Huang and Chen, 2016). It is first put forward by Professor Huang Zhonglian, who claimed that variational translation theory is a kind of principle that help people understand the law and rules of the phenomena of variation in translation. (Huang, 2002a, p.32) Later on, Professor Huang (2002b) further put forward 7 specific translation techniques: adding, deleting, editing, narrating, condensing, integrating, and altering. Based on the above seven adaptations, eleven variational translation methods, including selected translation, edited translation, narrated translation, condensed translation, summarized translation, summarized trans-comment, trans-comment, altered translation, annotated translation, trans-writing, and cited translation are proposed (Huang, 2020, p.105)

The core of variational translation theory is "adaptation", which is to meet the specific needs of specific readers under specific conditions (Huang, 2002c). It is raised compared to complete translation in which the translator converts all information from the source language into the target language. The distinguishing criterion is whether the original text should be fully kept.

Variational translation theory is not a pure theory, but a pragmatic translation one. As a result, the scope of its application remains to be discussed (Wu, 2018). It has been proven effective in several translation topics, but little attention has been paid to its application in the translation of corporate publicizing videos. To meet this gap, this study will explore how variational translation theory serves as a guideline for the translation of corporate publicizing videos.

At the same time, good communication effect is the goal that variational translation should achieve. Communication science is established in the 1940s in the United States. In 1948, Lasswell (1948, p. 35) devised the famous 5W model of communication in *The Structure and Function of Communication in Society*, which is regarded as the founding work of communication, namely: 1)Who? 2)Says what? 3)In which channel? 4)To whom? 5)With what effect? In this model, the

effect of information is the top concern. Some scholars argue that the effect of information on people is like a gunshot to a target and that readers are passive receivers. Schramm, who is also one of the founders of communication science, does not agree with this idea and proposes that the effectiveness of mass media is determined by how they are used by the target audience (Wilbur Schramm, 1973, p. 196), that is, the effectiveness of the message depends on whether the content of the message meets the needs of the audience.

Communication science is closely linked to translation study. The purpose of communication science is to study human information dissemination, and translation is the tool of information transmission. Wolfram Wilss, a German translation theorist, argues that translation is a specific form of communication linked to linguistic acts and decisions, while the traditional linguistic theory ignores the communicative nature of translation (Wills, 2001, pp. 13-14).

The communication effect is crucial for companies' development. And this paper is designed to probe variational translation strategies of corporate publicizing video from the perspective of communication science. It helps translators consider translation as an intercultural communication activity. Translation is the tool, and publicity is the goal, as a result, translation should meet the goal of publicity. However, in most cases, translators only translate information but do not publicize corporate values in the translation practice, thus confusing the target audience.

According to communication science, noise control, and communication load are priorities in the translation process.

3.1 Noise control:

In communication science, the information does not reach the audience completely after it is sent out from the information source due to the influence of various factors. These factors are collectively called "noise". It can be divided into linguistic, cultural, and psychological noise in the translation process. Strange expressions, redundant structures, and illogical sentences can lead to noise interfering with the understanding of target consumers. In this study, noise can not only arise from subtitles but also from other modes, such as visual and aural modes.

3.2 Communication load control

In this study, communication load refers to the amount of information contained in unit words. It is worth noting that communication load is not measured by the number of words, but the amount of information carried by words. It is a crucial indicator that we can take into account when we choose different variational translation methods. For example, metaphor and culture-loaded words are short but rich in information, and their huge amount of information often causes "communication overload".

In this study, communication science and variational translation theory are combined to build the following translation model for corporate publicizing video.

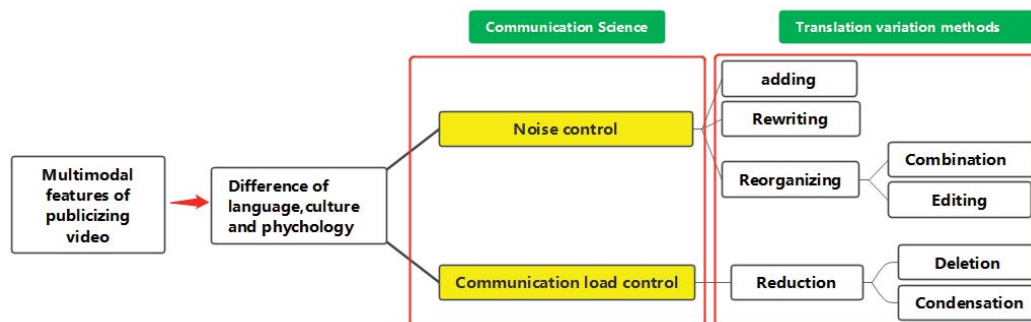


Table 1: An Integrated translation model of corporate publicizing video

According to this model, noise control and communication load control are goals of specific translation methods that are based on variational translation theory. The combination of communication science and variational translation theory provides invaluable insight into the translation of corporate publicizing videos.

4. Translation strategies for translating corporate publicizing video

Influenced by Chinese culture, some expressions in corporate publicizing videos are implicit and vague with many hidden meanings. These issues are demonstrated mainly in the following aspects:

- (1) Hyperbole and abstract expressions are often used in corporate publicizing videos, leading to semantic ambiguity.
- (2) The frequent use of metaphors leads to the absence or even conflict of connotative meaning.
- (3) Culture-loaded words create barriers to understanding
- (4) Industrial terminology and concept are not fully explained

Aiming at the above four translation issues, this study examines the guiding role of variational translation theory for corporate publicizing video translation.

4.1 Rewriting

Rewriting is a flexible combination of translating and writing. It refers to changing the form, and style of the original information to a more acquainted and acceptable one for target consumers. That's how we can meet the specific needs of specific consumers and make the translation conform to the reading habits of foreign consumers.

It is often difficult for English consumers to understand some unique Chinese expressions, and they may even be misunderstood. Rewriting them can help readers easily obtain information.

Example 1

Source text: 生在八步沙的郭翊，小时候见过妖怪，黑风黄沙把人捉走，爷爷告诉他，种树就能治妖怪。后来驴子交给郭翊的父亲，迎来日出送走晚霞，到了这一代，郭翊不想牵驴。他想走的路不一样。郭翊的 flag 立起来，赶新潮的村民也越来越多。郭和他的队伍走在大会上，热气腾腾。八步沙地风吹过来，没有沙子打脸（00：20）

——蚂蚁集团¹

Target Text : Guo Yi, born in Babusha, believes that he saw monsters when he was growing up. He saw dark winds and yellow sandstorms take people away. Guo's grandpa told him that the monsters can be tamed by planting trees. As per tradition, Guo's dad took over herding the family's donkeys, but Guo Yi is not keen to herd the animals when his turn comes. He wants to do something different. Guo put something new up in the fields, which attracted villagers near and far. Guo and his team are marching towards their goal, with great zeal. The wind is still blowing in Babusha, but people do not feel the sand against their faces anymore.

——Ant Group

This case is selected from the publicizing video of *Ant Group: Sowing*. Since the project began in 2016, it has achieved good fruits and brought a great reputation to Ant Group, and it has been praised by the United Nations.



Picture 1

In this case, there are some tricky problems. The first issue is the translation of “donkey”. Donkey is an important means of transportation for Chinese farmers, helping to haul saplings in the process of planting trees, but modern target audiences may not have this kind of experience, as a result, most of them can not realize that the donkey’s role is to help transport saplings. Based on the function of its role, it can be deduced that Guo Yi's father is given the task of planting trees when the donkey is given to his father. Guo Yi does not want to herd the donkey means that he does not want to plant trees traditionally. The

¹ Website:

<https://www.antgroup.com/news-media/media-library?type=%E5%AE%A3%E4%BC%A0%E7%89%87>

donkey's message is too subtle and complex, causing great noise to the understanding of target consumers. As a result, it has to be rewritten.

The second issue is the understanding of “flag”. In this video, its translation is “he wants to do something different”, but what is the new thing? There is no clue in this video, as a result, it may confuse the target audience. Based on visual information (Picture 1), it can be found that the flag standing up is a camera. Ant Group is an internet enterprise, and it introduces a new model of planting virtual trees via mobile phone. As a result, the flag can be translated as “apply internet planting model to the desert”. Rewriting enables connotation to be explicit, thus reducing communication load.



Picture 2

The next translation issue comes from the understanding of “郭和他的队伍走在大路上，热气腾腾”。According to visual information (Picture 2), the dust comes from the process of planting trees, and it is just like the steam from cooking. The more efforts are made, the faster and thicker the dust is raised. As a result, it can be concluded that “热气腾腾” means people are planting trees with great zeal. A better translation version is “in high spirits”. It has the same meaning and conforms to the movement of dust from the ground to the sky.

Based on the above analysis, it is suggested to modify the translation version as follows:

Suggested translation : Guo Yi, born in Babusha, believes that he saw monsters when he was growing up. He saw dark winds and yellow sandstorms take people away. Guo's grandpa told him that the monsters can be tamed by planting trees. **Guo's dad shoulders the responsibility for planting trees, but Guo Yi is not keen to plant trees traditionally when his turn comes.** He wants to do something different. **Instead, Guo applies an internet planting model to the desert, which attracted villagers near and far.** Guo and his team are marching towards their goal of preventing sandstorms, in high spirits. The wind is still blowing in Babusha, but people do not feel the sand against their faces anymore.

4.2 Deletion

Deletion means to omit redundant information as a way to highlight important information. Due to the difference in ideology, some political information will lead to misunderstanding. The slow development of audiovisual translation research is not only caused by technical limitations but is also subject to strict scrutiny of political systems. Its constraints are much greater than those of traditional texts because audiovisual materials convey more obscure messages. Massidda (2015) is a pioneer who studies censorship in audiovisual translation, especially the influence of political correctness on translation. She claims that videos with incorrect political orientation have little chance to complete the whole process of information dissemination. As a result, the information involved in political issues must be deleted in translation.

Example 2

Source Text: 公司汇集数位国家千人计划专家，实施全球战略布局 (03:02)

——北微传感2

Target Text: We bring several experts from National Thousand Talent Plan to implement a global strategic layout.

——Bewis Sensing

The "National Thousand Talents Plan", or the Overseas High-Level Talents Admission Program, is organized by China in December 2008, and it aims to introduce high-level talents studying and working overseas. However, the U.S. government has repeatedly and systematically prosecuted experts and scholars participating in the "National Thousand Talents Plan" on the grounds of obstructing national security since 2018. As a result, most of the common Westerners believe that the companies which are involved in this plan are illegal companies seeking to steal critical science and technology. Against this

² Website: <https://www.bwsensing.com/aboutus.html>

background, the "National Thousand Talents Plan" is still translated in the company's publicity video in 2023. It may lead to the intervention of the U.S. government and cause adverse effects on the company's business.

According to communication science, the translator acts as a "gatekeeper", and he would filter some content in the process of information encoding (Lewin, 1947, p. 145). Translators are part of social networks and gatekeeping behavior is also governed by social factors and subject to specific "social standards" (Duan, 2006, p. 143). In the translation process, a translator needs to fully understand the original message and translate it according to the expected publicity effect. The target audience of the corporate publicizing video is English-speaking consumers, so it needs to conform to their specific social standards. In this case, the translator ignored the social constraints of the "National Thousand Talents Plan", which was suppressed by the Western countries, thus causing serious political issues.

4.3 Editing

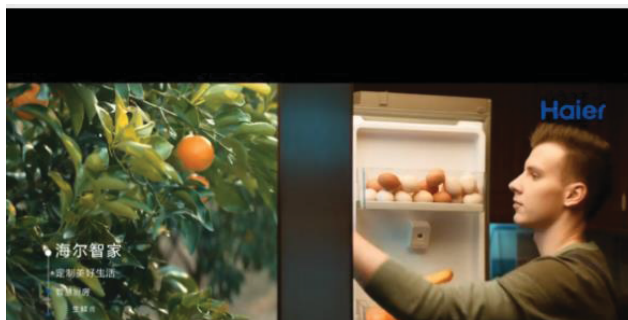
Editing is the process of editing original work and then translating it. It adjusts the structure and sequence of the original work according to the thinking habits of the target audience. It is also used to extract the required information due to the pervasive existence of hyperbole, metaphor, and abstract expressions in corporate publicizing videos because they often lead to semantic ambiguity, so the translator should determine the relevance of the information to the recipient.

Example 3

Source Text: 穿过葱茏的小径，把大自然的生命气息带回家，走过爱的四季，从一方天地，连接万千世界。让你的家和大地馈赠融为一体，给你以健康快乐的许诺（00:31）
——海尔3

Target Text: Through the verdant path, bring the breath of nature back to your home. Through the four seasons of love, connects the whole world from a tiny corner. Make your home one with the gifts of the earth, and give you a promise of health and happiness.

——Haier



Picture 3

Aesthetics is significant for Chinese corporate publicizing videos, so several rhetorics are used. However, information and facts are emphasized in English-speaking countries. In this case, some Chinese expressions are confusing, including "Make your home be one with the gifts of the earth, give you a promise of health and happiness." What's the meaning of the gift of the earth? How can your home be integrated with the gift of the earth? It does not conform to facts and logic in English.

According to visual information (Picture 3), the fresh fruit tree is put into the refrigerator. At the same time, it is well-known that one of the main products of Haier is the refrigerator, which is used to keep food fresh. As a result, it can be deduced that "the gift of the earth" in this video means fruit. "Only keep these fruit fresh, can we be healthy" is a logical sentence.

Based on the above analysis, the Chinese subtitle is edited as follows: "穿过葱茏的小径，把大自然的生命气息带回家，走过爱的四季，从一方天地，连接万千世界。让新鲜果蔬住进你的家，给你以健康快乐的许诺。" And then we can deliver a better translation version based on the above edited Chinese subtitle: ***"Through the verdant path, bring the breath***

of nature back to your home. Through the four seasons of love, connect the whole world from a tiny corner. Make your home full of fresh fruits and vegetables, guaranteeing your health and happiness.”

4.4 Adding

Adding means putting some explanatory words in translation when there is a cultural default, such as the addition of culture-loaded words, which are widely used in Chinese corporate publicizing videos. While conveying corporate values, these culture-loaded words present a great obstacle to target consumers, thus destroying the effect of communication. To deal with this problem, information supplementation serves as a good solution.

Example 4

Source Text: 从南巡讲话中的创业梦想而生，向一带一路的国际化方向嬗变。与时代同行的森源电气推动着中国，乃至世界电气制造行业的变革，展现出“大电气”发展思路，同步国家战略的精彩与神韵（00:12）——森源电气⁴

Target Text: Beginning with the *South Inspection Speech* and heading to the Belt and Road world stage. Advancing with the times, Senyuan Electric pushes forward the revolution of electric manufacturing in China and even the world. The "Great Electric" development idea is always keeping pace with the national strategy.

——Henan Senyuan Group Co., Ltd

In this case, “South Inspection Speech” refers to the historical event that Deng Xiaoping visited Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, and Shanghai in early 1992. During this tour, Deng put forward some new viewpoints on a series of crucial issues, such as the core of Marxism, and the essence of socialism. These significant speeches promote China’s reform and opening up.

Since then, private companies have sprung up in China, including Senyuan Electric. However, due to the lack of necessary cultural background, most of the target audiences are unable to tell the connection between “South Inspection Speech” and Senyuan Electric. As a result, this historical event becomes noise interfering with the information-decoding process.

To eliminate noise brought by culture-loaded words, more information is needed in translation. Since Deng Xiaoping is the hero of the "South Inspection Speech", and is well-known as the chief architect of China's reform and opening up, which promotes the development of Senyuan Electric, the speaker's name should be added. Apart from that, it happens in 1992, the time of major historical events should also be noted. Based on the above analysis, the suggested translation is *“Beginning with the speech made by Deng Xiaoping in 1992”*.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive and in-depth discussion on translation methods for corporate publicizing video, thus helping facilitate overseas communication. Corporate publicizing video is a great way for businesses that want to reach more people to show off their products or services creatively and interestingly. As a result, the methods of adaptation and translation will lay a solid foundation for future publicizing video translation.

Based on variational translation theory, the author proposes different variation methods from the perspective of communication science, including adding, rewriting, editing, and deletion. It’s recommended that abstract information should be edited before translation. What’s more, an addition should be adopted in the translation of culture-loaded words.

In this study, communication science provides a macro translation framework, while specific translation methods are summarized from variational translation theory. Based on the integrated translation model of corporate publicizing video, the adaptation and integration of original information which is hidden in diverse modes will be achieved, thus helping build better communication effects for companies that want to occupy more overseas market share.

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⁴ Website: <https://haokan.baidu.com/v?vid=6338075396034373152>

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