

# A Translation Study on Image Publicity Film of Hunan under the Background of “The Belt and Road” Initiative

## -- Taking Subtitle Translation of *This Is Hunan* as an example

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### Abstract

**Taking *This is Hunan* as an example, this study analyzes its subtitle translation and how it constructs the image of Hunan from four levels of culture, context, content and expression under the guidance of multimodal discourse analysis. The study found that the source language of the film has a strong discourse logic. The translation adopts free translation, omission and other translation strategies to reproduce the beauty and artistic conception of the language; visual and auditory symbols are used to match the lens at all levels to supplement and strengthen the language symbols of the source language, arousing audience's sensory impact; all levels are interconnected and supplemented to build a youthful, harmonious and colorful image of Hunan.**

### Keywords

**Multimodal; Image Publicity; Subtitle Translation.**

## 1. Introduction

At present, under the background of the "The Belt and Road", language is not only a communication tool, but also a carrier of culture and a bond that unites countries to integrate and cooperate closely [1], at the same time, the countries and regions within the initiative also have an eager demand to learn more about China. The development of multimedia technology has provided a broader development opportunity for multi-modal symbolic video, and multi-modal video that constructs meaning together with language, sound, image, and action has gradually become the main way of cross-cultural communication. The local publicity film combines images, sounds, colors and other symbols to construct a more three-dimensional, vivid and intuitive local image that can be perceived, and becomes an important window for the public to understand the place. Therefore, the quality of the subtitle translation directly affects overseas audience's perception of local image. Successful subtitle translation should ensure that the audience can understand as much positive content as possible with the shortest information, and at the same time need to take into account the actions and expressions of the characters in the film. Professor Zhang Delu pointed out that multimodal discourse is a phenomenon that utilizes various senses such as sight, hearing, touch, etc. to communicate through language, sound, image, action and other symbolic resources and means [2]. *This Is Hunan* is of vital significance to the international stage and to understanding of Hunan. The writer attempts to study the subtitle translation of this film from a multi-modal perspective, analyze the characteristics of its subtitle translation, hoping to improve the foreign audience's understanding of Hunan, and promote cross-cultural exchanges at home and abroad.

## 2. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In the 1950s, Harris firstly proposed discourse analysis. At that time, it mainly focused on the internal research of language, lacking the care of images, sounds, colors, etc. In the 1990s,

multimodal discourse analysis emerged in the West, overcoming the limitations of single-language research [3]. Based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis at the same time absorbs the trinity of media, object and interpretation from semiotic theory [2]. In 1977, Barthes' paper "Rhetoric of the image" marked the beginning of Western multimodal discourse analysis research, while in 1996, Kress and Van Leeuwen co-authored "Reading Images: Visual Design Grammar", representing a landmark achievement in the West [4]. Domestic research on this field started in the new century, and "Social Semiotic Analysis of Multimodal Discourse" aroused the attention and discussion of multimodal discourse analysis in domestic academic circles [5]. Hu Zhuanglin (2007), Zhu Yongsheng (2007), Zhang Delu (2009; 2010) and others jointly promote the development of multimodal discourse analysis in China [6][7]. Zhang Delu (2009) proposed a comprehensive theoretical framework for multimodal discourse analysis, including cultural, context, content, and expression levels, providing a new perspective for domestic research.

For the moment, domestic application of multimodal discourse research on translation mostly focuses on subtitle translation of film and television, and some scholars pay attention to multimodal foreign language teaching, few in other fields. With rapid development of emerging media technology, the external publicity of local governments and even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tends to choose short, concise and content-rich image films as the main media for external communications. With "multimodal" and "translation for going global" as keywords to search in CNKI, the writer finds that Wang Hong (2020), Mu Yiwu and Wu Yun (2021) analyzed the external publicity of folk culture and Chinese corporate image from multimodal perspective, respectively [8][9]. In addition, with "multimodal" and "This Is Hunan" as the subject words, Liu Jie (2022) analyzed the image of Hunan constructed from the perspective of multimodal metaphor, metonymy and their interaction [10]. It can be seen that at present, there is still a lack of scholars to study the subtitle translation of image promotion films from a multi-modal perspective, and image promotion films are increasingly favored by the country's foreign publicity. Studying its subtitle translation is of great significance for building local and national images.

### **3. Study on Subtitle Translation of this is Hunan from Multimodal Perspective**

This is Hunan was filmed by Hunan government and officially launched on October 1, 2018. It shows the five aspects of Hunan's ecology, feelings, colorfulness, industry and happiness. Its language is concise and beautiful, and the writing is neat and orderly. The all-round image of Hunan is constructed with five metaphors. The film fully exploits five symbolic modalities that commonly applied in film and television: oral modalities, written modalities, musical modalities, sound modalities, and moving image modalities, etc. [11]. Integrating elements such as action, expression, color, light, and sound likewise help audience immerse in the scene and feel the vivid and comprehensive Hunan. Its subtitle translation perfectly matches the language and cannot be well analyzed from a single level of language. Multimodal discourse analysis provides a path for the subtitle translation. The writer interprets its translation from four levels: cultural, context, content and expression, to better spread the voice of Hunan and promote the exchange of different cultures.

#### **3.1. Cultural Level**

Zhang Delu attached great significance to the cultural elements in subtitles, because whether the translation of cultural elements is in place directly affects the audience's understanding and acceptance[12]. The cultural level is the key that makes multimodal communication possible, including the ideology composed of people's thinking mode, life philosophy, living

habits, and all the unspoken rules of society, and the communication procedure or structural potential that can realize this ideology[2]. The translator should minimize the cultural gap as much as possible.

### Example 1

ST: [2:21]要看万山红遍，层林尽染，漫江碧透，百舸争流

English Translation: Hill on hill all in red; and wood on wood in a deep dye; the river green down to the bed; in speed a hundred barges vie.

### Example 2

ST: [4:50]要倾这湘江抒豪情，要上那九天揽日月

English Translation: We are go-getters; We are self-starters.

Example 1 is quoted from Mao Zedong's poem "Qinyuanchun·Changsha", which depicts a three-dimensional, vast and colorful autumn scenery in Hunan. The translation adopts literal translation and applies the method of interlaced rhyme in English poetry. The first (red) and third (bed) sentences have the same rhyme (/d/), and the second (dye) and fourth (vie) rhyme (/ai/), which is in line with the reading habits of the target language, narrowing the psychological distance with the audience. The first two sentences' structure of the translation (Hill on hill...wood on wood...) echoes each other, giving the audience a beauty imagination of range upon range of mountains. Example 2 Drawing from "Shui Diao Ge Tou, Re-climbing Jinggang Mountain" to express pride and ambition, "九天" refers to the very high place in the sky. In ancient times, it was believed that the sky had nine layers. "揽日月" refers to the extraction of the sun and the moon, which is an expression of Chinese culture. The translation adopts free translation taking into account the stylistic characteristics of English poetry, using the ending rhyme of "ers" in go-getters and self-starters. The sentence pattern is neat, and the same ending rhyme is used to create the image of Hunan people who are determined to win, pioneering and innovative.

In terms of language, the film mostly takes four-character idioms, quotes from scriptures and classics, and there are many quotations from poems and songs and Chinese culture-loaded words. When translating such subtitles, the translator needs to comprehensively consider the cultural differences of poetry between the source and target language, and adopts strategies such as free translation and stylistic combination to comply with the language characteristics of target language's poetry, so as to convey the cultural connotation well.

## 3.2. Context Level

In a specific context, communication is restricted by contextual factors[2]. Hu Zhuanglin divides context into situational context, cultural context and linguistic context[6]. When a publicity film conveys information or expresses meaning to foreign audiences, subtitles and context work together to enhance the audience's understanding and feelings[13]. Therefore, subtitle translation not only needs to fully consider the cultural environment of the audience, but also depends on the contextual factors in the film.

### Example 3

ST: [2:11]热血潇湘，伟人故里，多少钟灵毓秀。

English Translation: Hunan is indeed cradle of talents as Chairman Mao once wrote

### Example 4

ST: [0:32]湖南是一副青春盎然的画，绿水北去，浩浩汤汤；青山野立，影影绰绰；翠田盘旋，层层叠叠；还有飞鸟往返，悠悠然然。

English Translation: Hunan presents you a magnificent picture, lucid waters, lush mountains, green fields, migrant birds.

From the perspective of cultural context, in example 3, Hunan, also known as Xiaoxiang, has a strong historical background. It is the hometown of a great man--Mao Zedong. The ancestors of the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japanese aggression threw their blood here. "钟灵毓秀" comes from Liu Zongyuan's "马退山茅亭记", which refers to the beautiful mountains and rivers, and the talents are born in large numbers. This sentence contains numerous cultural information, and the literal translation cannot convey its connotation to the audience who do not know the history of Hunan. The translation adopts free translation and interpretation, and supplements the information of the great man as Chairman Mao. The picture changes from the former residence of Mao Zedong and the bronze statue of Mao Zedong to the beautiful mountains and rivers. Subtitles and pictures work together to facilitate the target language audience to understand the deep cultural context. Analyzing example 4 from the context of the situation and context, the second chapter of the film, "青春去看", firstly shows the picturesque as a whole, and then the pictures show the ecological environment of green mountains, green waters and beautiful scenery in turn. Different in language, Chinese employs four-character words, neatly aligned, and emphasizes repetition, while English prefers conciseness and avoidance of repetition. The subtitle translation here fully takes into account the differences in Chinese and English, and exploits the combination of subtitles and situational and contextual contexts to display repeated Chinese word with vivid images, deepening the audience's understanding of this "painting" of Hunan.

Subtitle translation is affected by the contextual factors in publicity film. It is necessary to consider whether the audience understands cultural connotation of the text, supplement relevant cultural information, consider the habitual differences between the source language and the target language from the context and situational context. The logical connection within the context is supplemented with subtitle information through a variety of modalities to deepen the contextual understanding.

### 3.3. Content Level

The content includes the discourse meaning and the formal level[14]. At the aspect of meaning, it includes discourse meaning and conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. At the formal level, the formal features of different modalities are related to each other and jointly reflect the meaning of discourse[2]. In publicity film's form, it is mainly manifested in the sound, soundtrack, language and sound effects of the auditory mode, and images in the visual mode, in which construction meaning of the audience is also multi-faceted[13].

#### Example 5

ST: [2:58]一花一叶如春风和煦；一颦一笑如夏雨热烈；一针一线如秋叶静美；一笔一划如冬竹挺拔。

English Translation: You may find the beauty in the flowers of spring, in the showers of summer, in the falling leaves of autumn and in the hardy bamboo of winter.

"一花一叶" corresponds to Anhua dark tea from picking to finished product, "一颦一笑" shows the inheritance of various theatrical cultures, "一针一线" reflects the exquisiteness of Hunan embroidery, and "一笔一划" is all about the colorfulness of Liling pottery glaze. The translation pays attention to the internal logic of the text, adds the subject and adopts free translation, and translates the relevant descriptions of spring, summer, autumn and winter, which is concise and clear. Through visual modalities, such as picking tea and making tea, threading a needle, the actor's action and expression, various pictures of pottery glaze, and auditory modalities, like the sound of tea brewing, the soothing soundtrack are integrated to allow the audience to experience a sensory feast and enhance the audience's understanding of Hunan's traditional culture, craftsmanship and characteristics.

The meaning-level translation of the film pays attention to internal logic, and the visual mode and the auditory mode of the film at the formal level complement each other when omitting, and attach importance to the beauty of the translation, which plays an important role in the construction of the meaning of pure language.

### 3.4. Expression Level

The expression level, also known as the media level, includes two major categories, linguistic and non-linguistic, and the linguistic one includes pure language and accompanying language. And accompanying language, such as loudness, pitch, and timbre of sounds, shape, size, and layout of fonts, assists, complements, and reinforces the transmission of language meaning[2]. In terms of dubbing, the dubbing of the video can vividly, accurately, effectively and directly promote the local image. *This is Hunan* switches from history and humanities to youthful vitality and modern technology, and the dubbing also flexibly prepares emotions and resonates accordingly. When dubbing history and humanities, the voice tends to have a heavy sense of history, sonorous and powerful, and full of atmosphere. When talking about "dream" and "experience", the dubbing corresponds modern rhythm, reflecting the youth of Hunan. Soothing, brisk and joyful soundtrack of each chapter echoes the theme of youth, showing the vigor and vitality of Hunan. The accompaniment of the classic song "Liuyang River" runs through the promo with a variety of instrumental music to give the audience an artistic expression. In terms of subtitle layout, the length and duration of the Chinese and English subtitles should be determined according to the screen language and dubbing. The film is mainly composed of four-character phrases and short and concise sentences. The subtitles and pictures perfectly match, and the audience can successfully read the information by combining the pictures and subtitles.

#### Example 6

ST: [3:32]拨动琴弦，回音蹁跹，写就仍是青春的模样，要在音符里，聆听你每一个绵延百年的秘密

English Translation: This spirited song and its every note tells a story of centuries-old

“蹁跹”refers to dance lightly, the performer plucked the strings quickly, creating a wonderful picture of the notes beating on the strings for the audience. The Xiangxi girl displayed traditional silver ornaments, filled with youthful smiles, to supplement the subtitle translation. "Spirited" means full of energy and vigor and the translation applies "tell" as the sense switching of “聆听”, integrating loose Chinese into a compact sentence to suit the light soundtrack and showing the youthful appearance of Hunan.

At the expression level, the film makes full use of the companion language to make up for the blanks and deficiencies of the pure language, and uses the dubbing of different speech rates and intonations, the soundtrack with different rhythm, and the action to arouse the audience's emotional resonance and sensory impact; translator should lay store by the adjustment of structure and sensory transformation, separating the text itself to give the text a sense of picture.

## 4. Conclusion

Under the background of "The Belt and Road", the translation of foreign propaganda has become more important, and with the increasingly mature and effective multimedia technology, the trend of using image propaganda films for cross-cultural communication has also received attention. Subtitle translation is the key to realizing cross-cultural communication and dissemination. This research, guided by the multimodal discourse analysis, focuses on the subtitle translation of *This Is Hunan*, and finds that the subtitle translation of publicity films should not be limited to language translation, but also need to pay attention to the cultural

differences of languages. The film reproduces the textual beauty of the source language through free translation, using various forms of symbols, such as visual modal action, color, auditory modal music, simultaneous sound to match, supplement and strengthen the picture language, give the audience a real feeling, and build a youthful, harmonious and colorful image of Hunan from multiple dimensions and at all levels.

## Acknowledgments

This work was supported by Education Reform Project of Hunan Province: Research on Teaching Mode of Foreign Language Courses in Universities Under the Background of "Internet +" Era (HNJG-2020-0477), and the Hunan Social Science Fund Project: A Study on Image Publicity Translation of Hunan Province in the Context of "The Belt and Road" (17YBA348).

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