

# The Subtitle Translation of War Movies from the Perspective of Function Plus Loyalty

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## Abstract

Nord's functionalist methodology is based on two cornerstones: function plus loyalty. Function refers to the factors that make a target text works in the intended way in the target situation. Loyalty refers to the interpersonal relationship between the initiator, the target-text addressees, the source-text sender and the translator. War movies are one of the common movie types, but translating their subtitles is more complicated than translating other kinds of movie subtitles. This paper analyzes the characteristics of the war movies, and discusses the different translation methods of the war movie subtitles under the guidance of the principle of function plus loyalty, in order to improve the quality of the Chinese subtitle translation of the war movies and the audience's acceptance.

## Keywords

Function Plus Loyalty; Subtitle Translation; War Movies.

## 1. Introduction

Christiane Nord, as one of the representatives of the German School of functionalist translation theory, has made great contribution to the development of functionalist approach. Her function plus loyalty gives much guidance to translators. According to her point of view, translators should produce functional target text which not only conforms to the requirement of the translation skopos fixed by the initiator, but also respect the legitimate interests of both authors of the original and the readers of the translation. In a word, translators need to consider personal relationship among the partners involving initiators, authors and readers in the process of translation.

Generally speaking, subtitle translation is a kind of interlingual translation, which means to translate dialogues of the actors and indispensable visual information into target language. From the perspective of the subtitle translation of war movies, it is a specific category of all types of movies because of its different background and environment. When we translate this kind of film, more attention should be paid in many aspects. Adhering to the function and loyalty theory is a helpful method to translate it.

Actually, war films emphasize more on the accuracy. Because of the cultural diversity and different knowledge base make subtitle translation of war films more difficult than other kinds of translation. For the sake of getting over these difficulties above, a proper theory is extremely needed. And this paper will introduce Nord's function plus loyalty theory in details and its application in the subtitle translation of war movies.

## 2. Characteristics of the Subtitle Translation of War Movies

The characteristics of war movies are more complicated than other kinds of movies. There are many difficulties and information should be paid attention to in subtitle translation of war movies. In the process of subtitle translation of war movies, it is necessary to master its difficulties so that we can increase its acceptability to audience.

## 2.1. Characteristics of Subtitles

Generally, we believe that movies are instantaneous, popular, without note, and audible.

The subtitle of movies are instantaneous. Unlike the literature which could be read for many times, subtitles of movies only have one chance to be comprehended when audience have trouble in understanding them. Though we can watch it again if we are watching movies, we will lose much joy, because these behaviors will interrupt our thoughts and effect our sentiments.

Subtitles of movies are popular because they will be showed to various people. They are different from literature in the aspect of target groups because movies are acceptable to more classes of people and the range of audience's ages is wider. Therefore, the subtitle translation need to be paid more attention to its clarity which means that the subtitles would be easy enough to be understood.

Subtitles don't have note. Annotation is able to be appended in the end of a page or the whole books in the process of translating literature when target groups are in trouble with understanding. But things are different when it comes to subtitle translation. Necessary explanation is allowed only in limited subtitles, which leaves the problems to translators.

Subtitles is audible. In order to be accepted by target groups there are a part of movies dubbed by voice actors. And this factor gives rise to the synchronism between scenes of movies and subtitle translation. As a result, we are able to understand the other countries' movies without staring at the subtitle translation. However, it is necessary that the subtitles must be showed in the same time with the plots.

These four characteristics of the movies subtitle above lead to some indispensable conditions which should be paid attention to in the process of translating the subtitles, especially in the perspective of war movies, because the translated version should embody these characteristics. At the same time, the subtitle translation is constrained by theme. And there are more difficulties and differences in the subtitle translation of war movies compared with other kinds of movies.

## 2.2. Difficulties in the Subtitle Translation of War Movies

Different culture and traditional terms give rise to barriers in the process of subtitle translation of war movies. In this sort of movies, people's living conditions and background differ from the contemporary life and its frequently-used dialogues are very different from ordinary dialogues because there are more proper nouns such as the name of weapons, instructions or commands as well as some proverbs. The intended audience of war films are not the military experts and researchers of weapons, but common people even the children who are interested in wars are able to understand the war movies. Therefore translators should select appropriate tones and words to express meanings of source text in order to make it accepted by all kinds of audience. What is more, when facing different countries' audience, appropriate words should be applied because their attitude to different wars are distinct. It is necessary that translators pay attention to the tastes of audience under different living conditions and improve the acceptability of the subtitle translation. There are many unique proverbs and wording in a country that can only be comprehended by the native speakers. To achieve popularity, it is indispensable that translators should make themselves master these two cultures. To the war film *Waterloo Bridge*, there is a voice-over: "at 11:15 this morning, the Prime Minister, speaking to the nation from Number Ten Downing Street, announced that Great Britain is at war with Germany." It is believed that a large number of Chinese people will be confused about its literal translation because they have no idea about the implication of the site Number Ten Downing Street. In fact, all of the British know that Number Ten Downing Street is residence of the British Prime Minister. When it comes to this kind of problems, translators need to explain its

connotation so that the clarity of the culture image will be enhanced for audience. As a result, the acceptability of the subtitle translation of war movies are able to be improved.

There will be many Sequences portraying battles that involve fighter planes, warships, tanks and firearms in the war movies. Therefore, translators must master more words relating to wars to translate subtitles accurately.

### **3. Introduction to Function Plus Loyalty Theory**

As one of the influential theories, Function plus Loyalty makes great contribution to the development of translation. Function plus Loyalty is a theory which has been agreed by many eminent translators. And it is not only restrained to the theory of faithfulness proposed by Yan Fu, but also pay attention to the personal relationships in the process of translation. However, the fact that Function plus Loyalty Theory is not an absolute and incontrovertible rule of translation should be emphasized. It also has some limitations which need to be further studied and improved.

#### **3.1. The Four-function Model in Translation**

Function plus loyalty laid solid foundation for Nord's functionalist methodology. Function refers to the factors making a target text work in the intended way in the target situation. And loyalty refers to personal relationship among translators, source-text senders, target-source addressees and initiators of the translation.

Nord holds that there are a great deal of models of language function that could serve as starting points for the analysis of communicative functions in texts. In terms of the combination of two previous models: organon model which means that language functions including appeal function, expressive function and representation function proposed by Karl Bühler and Roman Jakobson's model of language functions, Christiane Nord divides the language function into four including referential function, expressive function, appellative function and phatic function.

##### **Referential function**

It is "used as a symbol of the object of reference (Open Theology 2016; 2: 566)" refers to relationships between nouns and its referents or objects and phenomena of the world. The referential function relies on an appropriate balance between the information mentioned definitely in source texts and the information not mentioned which should be known by audience. Under the circumstances that audience are unable to relate the explicit information with matters already known to them, texts are hard to be understood. Especially because of the differences between distinct cultures, the balance between the expected translation and the translated version will be thoroughly destroyed. To maintain the balance, it is necessary that translators should increase a number of indispensable notes. However, notes are not allowed under some conditions, usually, in the perspective of subtitle translation. And translators should adopt corresponding words of target language compared with source text in order to improve the acceptability of subtitles to the target audience and decrease their unfamiliarity to another culture.

##### **Expressive function**

It is "used as a symptom of the sender's state of mind (Open Theology 2016; 2: 566)" referring to expression of the sender's attitude or feelings towards the objects and phenomena dealt with in the text. Provided that the expression being conveyed is explicit, other countries' audience are able to understand it. However, if the author's comment is implicit, other countries' audiences or readers will be confused to his information because of the large gap between two cultures. There are so many peculiar expression to different people in different languages. Generally speaking, a great deal of particular metaphors and connotations are difficult to be

comprehended for the people who are unfamiliar to them. And in order to avoid the misunderstanding, translators usually add their own assessments according to original movies explaining the implication or the real intention of authors. In other words, translators will explain and translate the source text in terms of the meanings of itself, for the sake of ensuring that target groups will completely know it.

### **Appellative function**

It is “used as a stimulus intended to move the receiver into some kind of attitude or action (Open Theology 2016; 2: 566)”referring to the appealing to the audience’s feelings, knowledge and sensibility. The behaviors that we persuade someone or share an opinion with someone gives expressions to this function.

### **Phatic function**

It was first proposed by Christiane Nord, as one of the most essential functions of language. Phatic function is used to begin, maintain or finish a conversation. People take advantage of phatic communication to create an atmosphere or maintain human relations in society rather than exchange of information. “It is the phatic function, which refers to the channel of communication. This means that some signs are simply intended to make sure that the channel works (Open Theology 2016; 2: 566)”. The main specifications of this function have three aspects: beginning a conversation such as a greeting or an introduction, maintaining the conversation such as using topic-comment progression or connectives and closing the communicative interaction such as summing up what has been said.

Actually, we can find that there is few text without function excepting for some absolute expressions or utterances. And translators often take advantages of analyzing the functions of language to define the structures of translated version. In the views of Nord, the purpose or intended functions of translation is to eliminate the gap between two kinds of cultures and make the source culture accept by target groups rather than bring texts to them. The loyalty principle, which is also a significant complement to Skopos, requires translators to respect senders’ communicative intentions and expectations of receivers.

## **3.2. Loyalty Theory**

Nord believes that the loyalty principle “account for the culture-specificity of translation concepts, setting an ethical limitation to the otherwise unlimited range of possible Skopoi for the translation of one particular source text (Nord 126).” And Loyalty refers to the responsibility of translators, as mediators between two cultures, towards their partners who are source-text authors, target-text receivers and clients or commissioners of the translation. We often regard the loyalty principle as a rule which means that translators need to consider the intentions and expectations of cooperation partners including translators, authors, initiators and target readers in the process of translation. Not only authors of the text but also target readers should be respected, because they have their own expectations to translated versions.

Nord holds that “Loyalty commits the translator bilaterally to the source and the target sides. It must not be mixed up with fidelity or faithfulness, concepts that usually refer to a relationship holding between the source and the target texts. Loyalty is an interpersonal category referring to a social relationship between people (Nord 125).” That is to say, translators will not only emphasize the faithfulness of source text, but also pay more attention to the attitudes, thoughts, culture and tradition of target groups. However, under these circumstance, she believes that translators need to behave as mediators who are able to alleviate conflicts of original authors, receivers and themselves. In order to resolve these problems, Nord holds that translators can write additional backgrounds and introductions. But for the fidelity or equivalence, they refers to the similarities between the source text and the target source in the perspective of linguistic

or stylistic rather than the interpersonal relationship between translators and partners in the process of translation.

In fact, loyalty theory restricts the functional scope of translations, but it increases the times of negotiation between translators and target groups. It stresses the social relationship between the participants of the source text and target text. Although it is necessary that translators comply with the fidelity rule which refers to inter-textual coherence between source text and its translation in order to convey the original meaning of the text. However, in Nord's opinion, expectations of target groups also should be considered. Compared with the principle of faithfulness, which is suggested by Yan Fu, loyalty theory is obviously more comprehensive, scientific and significant. In the aspect of translation, loyalty theory has made great progress.

Nowadays, in the subtitle translation, we can also find that the function and loyalty theory is one of the most important theory guiding the subtitle translation. Because with the development of the science and technology as well as the economy, the extent of globalization is deeper and deeper. Cultures and traditions are transmitted by films, video and TV shows, therefore we can understand the world. Translators are going to shoulder the responsibility of cultural exchange. In order to enhance the accessibility of translation, it is significant to take advantage of function plus loyalty theory. People regard subtitles of war movies as one of the most difficult subtitles to be translated, because wars usually full of disputes and doubts. With reasonable and rigorous writing skills, translators must consider not only intentions and expectations of all target groups but also the necessity of narrating truths which means to accurately translate subtitles of original movies.

#### **4. Function Plus Loyalty in Subtitle Translation of War Movies**

There will be three perspectives of the subtitle translation of war movies resorting function plus loyalty theory in the following text. Nowadays, in the process of subtitle translation, translators also pay more attention to the personal relationship of all its partners including the translator, the source-text senders, target-text addressees and the initiator. Therefore, the acceptability to various audience is widely achieved. Translators find a better way to satisfy the four sides involving the translator, the source-text senders, target-text addressees and the initiator by means of coordinating and negotiating.

For the functions of text which has been researched by Nord, she concludes that they will impact the practical process of translation. She stressed that once the translators has understood the source text, they will compared it with expectations of target-text addresses in order to omit the unnecessary text. By this way, the subtitle translation can be accepted easily because audience can get the most accurate and perspicuous translated version in limited time.

##### **4.1. Referential Function and Loyalty**

Referential function, as one of the four functions of texts proposed by Nord, is widely used in the subtitle translation of war movies. It can be used to narrate facts and offer helps to audience to understand the movies. Considering the referential function of texts, the information of subtitle will be understood by audience more easily. And loyalty principle is also good for the accuracy of subtitles and the acceptability of audience. Especially for the war movies, there are more complicated messages unfamiliar to the audience. Therefore the referential function and loyalty should be considered.

##### **Example 1:**

We don't need a volunteer. I know someone who ought to get off. This one. He's a German spy.  
无需自愿，我知道谁该下去。他是个德国间谍。

Translators considered the referential function in this subtitle because it represents a truth. The fact is that he identifies a German spy sneaking into their troops. And for the sentence “we don’t need a volunteer”, translators has not resorted literal translation, but he has analyzed implication of talker’s utterances and adopt an available sentence for Chinese audience. In China, we all know that grammars and sentence patterns are not stressed. Apart from that, the non-subject sentence is a unique sentence pattern in Chinese. In order to reflect Chinese culture, translators uses non-subject sentence to describe the situation. This method not only complies with the loyalty theory, but also gives consideration to the source text, translation and audience. The translation alleviates the possible conflicts amid initiators, source-text senders, translators and the target-text addressees because it was translated as faithfully as possible and satisfies expectation of receivers.

### Example 2:

When the boy was born, like all Spartans, he was inspected. If he’d been small or puny or sickly or misshapen, he would have been discarded. From the time he could stand, he was baptized in the fire of combat, taught never to retreat, never to surrender, taught that death on the battlefield in service to Sparta was the greatest glory he could achieve in his life.

当一个男婴出生后，就像斯巴达所有婴儿一样会被仔细地检视。如果他们太小、太弱、多病、畸形，就会被抛弃。从他能站稳的那一刻便开始接受战斗的洗礼。被教育要从不退缩，从不投降。并被灌输一个观念：为斯巴达战死沙场是人一生中所能成就的最大荣耀。

The subtitle is a paragraph of aside showing a fact. It narrates a cruel phenomenon during the time of Greco-Persian Wars. Audience are able to understand these messages through the subtitle. That is to say, the referential function is considered by translators in this subtitle.

To achieve the aim that complying the loyalty principle, translators adopt the same formation of original subtitle as the translated subtitle as far as possible. And they also take audience’s habits of read into consideration. Especially in the second sentence, translators add “观念” in the translated subtitle, which more inclines to be understood by Chinese audience.

### Example 3:

On my mark, Fortis 2. Draw him left. Three, two, one. Mark.

听我指令，福蒂斯二号，引他往左侧。321，行动。

Clear.

搞定。

Fortis 2, I have you to my port. I have no eyes on Fortis Leader. Over.

福蒂斯二号，我看到你在左舷，但没有看到福蒂斯长机，完毕。

I understand, Fortis 1. Orbit for a look.

收到，福蒂斯一号。环形视察一周。

The subtitle gives expression to two pilots’ communication. Audience are able to know the facts through this subtitle, therefore it applies referential function.

In the war time, some words will have some special meanings which are different from the common use. In order to show the same information to all audience, translators need to master the applications of these words. And when translators translate them into Chinese, they also should select formal Chinese characters to achieve the aim that the translated subtitles should be loyalty to the authors. They should insure that all the audience over the world are able to accept the same messages. At the same time, the habits and cultural tradition of audience need to be considered. In this subtitle, translators also select characters which are commonly used in Chinese wars. Therefore, Chinese audience can accept and understand this subtitle well.

## 4.2. Expressive Function and Loyalty

We can often find that texts give expression to implication and sentiments of authors. And the translated subtitle also needs to reflect these messages. However, we will usually find that the feeling and evaluation are not that obvious in the process of translation. At that time, translators often add their assessments considering the loyalty principle to show the appropriate intention or expectation of authors.

### Example 1:

Hang on. Okay. Okay, just.....That's it. That's good enough. It's gonna keep some pressure on. There we go. There we go.

没事。很快就好了。会有一些压痛感。忍一忍，能听到吗？

Translators considered the expressive function in this subtitle translation. The translation shows that sender's anxiety and worry. Nord believes that expressive function can be divided into two sections including emotive function and evaluative function. The former refers to the feeling and the latter refers to the evaluation. Obviously, this translation reflects sender's feeling.

There are words speaking to a wounded soldier. It can be easily found that the translated version is almost total free translation. However, we can still say that it abides by loyalty principle. Because loyalty principle emphasizes on the social relationship between the partners of the translation. Therefore the acceptability of translations was stressed. We can see that the translation respecting the author's individual communicative intentions is able to be comprehended by Chinese audience. Actually, the source text is very colloquial so that the meaning is difficult to be worked out without plots. The translation focuses on actual objectives, but source-text stresses on the use of empty words. This phenomenon reflects the different culture and habits of China and foreign country.

In order to tackle with this kind of problems, translators change some forms of sentences without breaking the principle of loyalty, to coordinate the "interpersonal relationship between translator, the source-text sender, the target-text addressees and the initiator (Nord, 126)".

### Example 2:

He don't speak English. If he does it's with an accent that's thicker than sauerkraut sauce.

他不会说英语。就算说，也冒着一股德国酸白菜味。

Translators considered the expressive function in this translated subtitle. Translator utilizes a metaphorical sentence to express the aversion of the talker.

In German, sauerkraut is a traditional vegetable called Dongbei food in Europe. The sentence "if he does it's with an accent that's thicker than sauerkraut sauce" actually implies that "he" is a German. However, a large number of Chinese audience don't know it. In order to make the translation accept by them, translator adds two characters "德国". On the basis of abiding by faithfulness, translators gives consideration to the loyalty principle. Because of the dissimilarities between Chinese culture and foreign cultures, additional words are added in order to make Chinese audience clear. This method is able to link up target-text addressees and source-text senders and build social relationship between them. What is more, "frog" is often sarcastically regarded as the symbol of French. When in translating, we often translate it to be "法国佬" for the sake of reflecting satiric attitude. Because in china, the word "佬" implies contempt.

## 4.3. Appellative Function and Loyalty

Appellative function often refers that one persuades someone or shares his opinion with someone. In subtitles of war movies, this function is one of the most common function. We can

find them in many circumstances such as the plots shows that actors' instructions and commands. In addition, the loyalty is also a significant principle we should consider.

### Example 1:

Seeing home doesn't help us get here, colonel.

望穿秋水也归国无门，上校。

Translators considered the illustrative function which is one of the five types of appellative functions (Nord divides the appellative function into five types involving illustrative function, persuasive function, imperative function, pedagogical function and advertising function.) proposed by Nord. Illustrative function is often used to evoke the reaction that recognition of something known. Obviously, both sides of the communication know the truth that they are unable to return to homeland without rescuers.

According to Nord's function plus loyalty theory, the translator has taken advantage of idioms which are stereotyped phrases or short sentences in Chinese characters in the process of translation. As a major feature of Chinese traditional culture, idioms are more accessible for Chinese audience. On the basis of being faithful in denotation and connotation, translators also pays attention to expectations of target-text receivers. The translated version can be accepted by not only the source-text sender and the initiator because it conforms to loyalty, but also be accepted by translators and target-text addressees. In the target culture, it is necessary to make sure the translated version was appropriately received. However, Loyalty limits the range of justifiable target-text functions for the source-text. Because the translator translates the source-text to an exaggerated sentence which conforms to Chinese culture. It can be seen that the translated version has coordinated the personal relationship of the participants of the translation. In a word, function plus loyalty theory is well considered in the translated version.

### Example 2:

If you value your lives over your complete annihilation, listen carefully, Leonidas, Xerxes conquers and controls everything he rests his eyes upon. So vast, it drinks the rivers dry. All the King Xerxes requires is this: a simple offering of earth and water, a token of Sparta's submission to the will of Xerxes.

如果你珍惜百姓的生命，不愿被灭国，列奥尼达，听仔细了，薛西斯王征服和统治了他视野所及的一切，能饮尽任何一条河川，天王薛西斯王只有一个简单的要求：你献上一块土和一瓢水，表示斯巴达愿意臣服于薛西斯的意志。

Translators has took advantage of appellative function which is one of the four functions of language held by Nord. Translators considered imperative function, which means that receivers are expected to do things asked by senders. Obviously, this sentence reflects that one wants Leonidas to surrender and pay tribute to Xerxes.

The loyalty principle is also reflected here. We can find that translators translate "your" to "百姓的" here. It is because different culture and environment between European countries and China. As we all know, Chinese audience are more accustomed to these characters which have its own tradition in China. Therefore, translators select a more appropriate word to Chinese. They respect the expectations and intentions of target groups but express the information which is different from the original subtitle to some extent. However, we can still say that the subtitle complies the loyalty principle according to Nord's function plus loyalty because translators take personal relationship between audience and authors into consideration, and the translated subtitle is able to be accepted by them.

### Example 3:

Councilmen, I stand before you not only as your queen, I come to you with great humility. We are at war, gentlemen. We must send the entire Spartan army to aid our king in the preservation of not just ourselves, but of our children. Send the army for the preservation of liberty, send it for justice, send it for law and order, and send it for reason. But most importantly, send our army for hope.

敬爱的议员们，我不仅以王后的身份站在你们面前，我以最谦卑的心情来这里。各位，我们正在打仗，一定要派整个军队去支援国王。我们不仅要救自己，还有后世子孙。派军队是要拯救我们的自由，公正，法治，理性。但更重要的是，我们才有希望。

The subtitle state a speech persuading councilmen to offer helps to their king. Therefore, the appellative function is applied in this subtitle.

We can find that the tone of translated subtitle is persuasive and rhythmic. When translators translate speeches, the same tones of the original subtitles is extremely significant. They must find appropriate Chinese characters to express the same information the authors want to express. In this subtitle, translators omit some “send it for”, because they translate “Send the army for the preservation of liberty, send it for justice, send it for law and order, and send it for reason” to “派军队是要拯救我们的自由，公正，法治，理性”. Actually, the translated subtitle is more rhythmic in Chinese characters and more persuasive to Chinese. Translators have considered the intensions and expectations of Chinese, so we can find loyalty principle is considered by translators in this subtitle translation.

## 5. Conclusion

With the globalization of the world, translation plays one of the most important roles in transmitting culture. We can exchange culture with other countries, which make people better know the history and world. As an important method of knowing other countries, foreign films can transmit cultures to some extent. The war movie plays an important role in transmitting the history for the people who are interested in it. This kind of movies are also used to advocate peace in the world. This paper makes contribution to the development of subtitle translation of war movies. Complying with function plus loyalty, target-text addresses are able to accept the translation and understand its meaning well.

## Acknowledgments

Through writing, I have learned a lot of knowledge concerning the topic of this thesis. And for the completion of this thesis, I want to show my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Shaohua Wei, who has given me lots of detailed and valuable advice on structure, writing approaches and many other aspects of the thesis. Besides, his wide knowledge and excellent literary quality benefit this thesis a lot.

My sincere thanks also go to those teachers in English Department whose lectures have enriched my knowledge and provided me with a lot of enlightenment.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the teachers in the Guangxi University of Science and Technology and to all my classmates.

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