

Analysis of the Subtitle Translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* from the Perspective of Reception Theory

Jinyi Yan

School of Foreign Languages, Henan University of Technology, Zhengzhou 450001, China

Abstract

In today's society, films play a significant part in promoting culture between China and other countries. Films at home and abroad are constantly introduced, and the increasing demand for film subtitle translation also promotes the relevant research on film subtitles. Different from the previous literary theories that pay attention to the author and the text, reception theory, as a kind of reader response theory, emphasizes readers' interpretation and acceptance of literary texts as well as provides a new research perspective for literary scholars. However, with time going by, more and more scholars begin to pay attention to the application value of this theory to subtitle translation. This thesis mainly studies the subtitle translation of the Oscar-winning film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* from the perspective of reception theory. Starting from the various elements of this movie, including life and death, eternity, loneliness, love and friendship, this thesis analyzes how the subtitle translator can meet the expectation horizon of the audience, shorten the aesthetic distance between the audience and the film and help the audience to achieve fusion of horizon. The main content of this thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter introduces the subtitle translation and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. The second chapter introduces the reception theory and the third chapter analyzes the subtitle translation in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* from the perspective of reception theory. The innovation of this thesis is to combine the theory of reception aesthetics with the subtitles of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* to analyze the corpus and translation skills used in the film. Finally, the author concludes that when translating film subtitles, the translator should fully consider the audiences' cultural habits and aesthetic preferences, respect the audiences' central position and vision of expectation, so that the film subtitles can be easily accepted by the target language audience.

Keywords

Subtitle translation, Reception theory, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

1. Introduction

As a carrier of cultural exchange, films take a big part in international communication. With the help of Internet, it's easier for audiences at home to watch those films at abroad. But if audiences pursuit the understanding of the foreign films, then the translation of films is quite necessary. Films with different languages, cultures and backgrounds want to spread well among audiences in other countries, the first thing to do is to overcome language barriers. There are two fields mainly: the translation of subtitle and dubbing. For the sake of appreciating the original works and improving their foreign language proficiency, the audience tend to choose subtitle translation. High-quality subtitle translation is helpful for the audience to understand the information content and appreciate the cultural meaning of films. Therefore, both domestic scholars and abroad scholars have paid attention to subtitle translation and conducted a systematic study of it. Scholars have studied the theory of subtitle translation, the translation process, the evaluation system of subtitle translation and the practical guidance of

subtitle translation, which provides an important reference for the study of subtitle translation in the future. Since published, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* have received a lot of praise. It is very meaningful. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* won three Oscars in 2009, so there are many studies on the film itself and its subtitle translation. However, in terms of subtitle translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, many of them are conducted from the perspective of Skopos theory and functional equivalence theory but little attention is paid to reception theory. Reception theory examines the reception of a literary work but viewed by readers, hence it has much room to explore it. Under such circumstances, this study attempts to use this famous film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* as a case study and employs the reception theory to analyze the subtitle translation. This thesis attempts to examine the English to Chinese film subtitle translation. How to introduce foreign cultures into China and make the Chinese audience better understand the film are very important for the subtitle translator. What's more, the subtitle translation should guarantee the full understanding of the audience. Actors' performance together with the audiences' reception to the film determines the formation of subtitles on screen. There is a need to do some researches on film subtitle from several different aspects.

2. Subtitle Translation and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

In this chapter, the author will give some information about subtitle translation and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, which includes four parts. First is the definition of subtitle translation. Second is previous studies on film subtitle translation. Third is introduction to *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* and the fourth part are features of subtitle translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*.

2.1. Definition of Subtitle Translation

So far, there is no relatively unified definition of subtitle translation. Among them, the definition of subtitle translation by the Danish translator Henrik Gottlieb is relatively more complete and scientific. He defines subtitle translation as "translating the oral or written source text of an audio-visual product into a written target text and adding it to the original text image at the bottom of the screen" [1]. Based on linguistics, subtitle translation can be divided into intra-lingual subtitling and inter-lingual subtitling. Intra-lingual subtitle translation is also known as "vertical subtitling translation", which changes the way of speaking, but the language does not change; inter-lingual subtitle translation, also known as "diagonal subtitling translation", translates the source language into the target language, and the target language is synchronously overprinted on the screen or at the bottom of the picture [2]. Sometimes both intra-lingual translation and inter-lingual translation are involved. In this dual translation process, intra-lingual translation is usually the basis of inter-lingual translation.

2.2. Previous Studies on Film Subtitle Translation

The research in the field of film and television translation first began in the west, and now the experts active in this field are mainly western scholars, especially European researchers. The first separate study of subtitle translation in the west was the article *On Subtitles in Television Programmes* published by Dollerup on Bable in 1974 [3]. In the 1990s, the study of film and television translation in the west began its "golden age". The theory of film and television translation has made a breakthrough. Since 1995, western film and television translation studies have entered an era of rapid development, and the relevant theoretical studies have increased significantly, especially the research achievements of European scholars.

The study of film and television translation in China started relatively late. The earliest practice of subtitle translation in China appeared in the 1920s and 1930s. After 1921, China's domestic film industry gradually developed. The number of imported foreign films has begun to increase,

and a large number of audio films have also entered the Chinese market. In this context, the subtitle translation rose accordingly. However, around 1946, dubbing films gradually became popular, and subtitle translation was ignored. It is no accident that subtitle translation was snubbed in China. On the one hand, the general public at that time did not have a good reading level and did not know a foreign language, so it was difficult to enjoy subtitled films. On the other hand, the effect of subtitle translation at that time was not satisfactory. For example, Yuan noticed that "some films have added some Chinese subtitles, but they are still difficult for the audience to understand" [4]. However, since the end of the 20th century, thanks to the rise of "tape translation" and later "network translation", the status of subtitle translation and dubbing translation has been reversed in China. "Subtitle translation, which has been silent in China for half a century, has finally made a comeback" [5]. Sina.com once conducted a survey on overseas film and television viewing habits, and the data showed that 69% of the respondents preferred to watch the original film with subtitles [6]. Subtitle translation has regained its popularity in China.

2.3. Introduction to *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

The film directed by famous director David Finch is adapted from a novel of the same name by Fitzgerald. The film tells the story of Benjamin Button born in the image of an ancient old man who violates the laws of nature and becomes younger and younger as time goes by. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is of great significance, which covers too much, about life and death, about eternity, and about loneliness. After watching the movie, it seems that we have experienced our whole life. Perhaps, some people indulge in the beauty of the southern United States, some people lament Benjamin's fantasy life. But behind the film, there are still many emotions and philosophies we need to aftertaste. The plot of the film was set during the World War I to the World War II. The story begins with a watchmaker who roughly describes his son died in the World War II and left him forever, so he made a clock that walked backwards. The clock going backwards is that watchmaker expects his son to return home, farm, get married and have children, which has a certain anti-war significance. This film, defined as a science fiction, is full of narratives about death from beginning to end. The film begins in a critically ill ward, and the audience sees the dying old lady. The film ends with the death of Daisy. In the flashback, Benjamin is born at the cost of his mother and finally he dies like a baby in the embrace of his lover Daisy. Western modern values have changed from God-oriented to human-oriented, truly observing the characteristics of human life and what human nature is. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is such a film to explore the meaning of life. Through a large number of narration of death and description of survival state, the film shows the western modern concept of "happy life and euthanasia". Although China and the west are in different longitudes and latitudes and have different cultural customs, there are many similarities in the face of the eternal topic of the concept of life and death. They all realize that life is accidental and death is inevitable, and they all value life and sorrow.

2.4. Features of Subtitle Translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*

The narrative mode of the combination of other narration and self-recollection tells the protagonist's "rewind" life, which let us have a more realistic sense of fantasy color in the film. Portraying the characters and highlighting the theme of the film are inseparable from the wonderful dialogue. There are many classic lines in the film, which are very meaningful, such as "our lives were determined by the opportunity, even if we miss the person" and "we're meant to lose the people we love. How else would we know how important they are to us." The combination of philosophical lines and narration makes us feel more deeply and subtly about the unique thinking of time and life from the human level: if life can start all over again, we should cherish the hasty time and take actions to realize the infinite possibilities of life, appreciate life, laugh to setbacks, adapt to impermanence, have the courage to open the journey

of life, and prepare to face all new possibilities. There are many features in subtitle translation, but in this thesis, the author will discuss three features mainly, that is: immediacy, popularization and emotionalization.

2.4.1. Immediacy

The instantaneous characteristic of film subtitles is very obvious. The subtitle and the dialogue of the characters in the film are carried out at the same time, and the display time of each line is relatively short. Compared with other paper literary works, the content of film subtitle translation should not be too complex and cumbersome, nor can it have too strong logic, otherwise it is difficult for the audience to understand the meaning of the lines in a short time.

2.4.2. Popularization

As a kind of popular art, film is shown to ordinary people all over the world. No matter how advanced cultural connotation or deep emotion the film wants to express, the film subtitle translation should be in line with the general education level of the broad audience. In this way, the audience will be able to understand and feel the content of the story shown in the film through a short viewing time.

2.4.3. Emotionalization

The reason why the film works can attract the audience lies in the sincere feelings expressed. The expression of these emotions needs to be realized through spoken and written language. In film subtitle translation, it is necessary to make a reasonable translation according to the language and emotional expressions of the country to which the audience belongs, so that the audience can more clearly understand the emotional content to be expressed in the film works. Only in this way can films infect audiences in different countries and regions.

3. Overview of Reception Theory

In this chapter, the reception theory will be introduced, which includes the origin and development of reception theory as well as the main ideas of reception theory.

3.1. Origin and Development of Reception Theory

Reception theory originated from reception aesthetics initiated by German scholars Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser in the 1960s. Its core is to change literary theory from "text-centered theory" to "reader-centered theory". Jauss holds that "the author, work and public is just like a triangle, though the public is not passive, and without the chain of mere reaction, it is an energy formative of history. The history life of a literary work cannot be realized without the active of the readers" [7]. In a word, without reading and understanding, the work itself does not have any meaning, but a lifeless language symbol material, and the meaning and value of the work are given by the reader's reading. In addition, the process of acceptance is a process in which readers actively participate, not negative. Reception theory opens up new ideas and patterns in the study of literature and aesthetics, which shifts the focus of literature and aesthetics to readers and their reading activities and fundamentally changes the traditional research vision in these fields. It has milestone-like far-reaching significance.

3.2. Main Ideas in Reception Theory

Horizon of expectation, aesthetic distance and fusion of horizon are three important concepts in reception theory.

3.2.1. Horizon of Expectation

In Jauss's theory, reader's horizon of expectation is the core concept. Before reading, readers have a potential expectation of the meaning of literary works, that is, horizon of expectation. He put forward this concept in 1982. In his opinion, horizon refers to "an inter-subjective system

or structure of expectation, a 'system of references' or a mindset that a hypothetical individual might bring to any text" [8]. Due to the existence of various complex factors, such as personal ideological concept, moral tendency, aesthetic taste, intuitive ability, acceptance level and so on, the receptive subject-readers often form many established psychological schemata, that is, all kinds of life experiences, these are the readers' horizon of expectation.

3.2.2. Aesthetic Distance

The famous Swiss psychologist Edward Bullough published the article "Psychological distance as an artistic factor and aesthetic principle" in Volume 5 of the British Journal of Psychology in 1912, and put forward the aesthetic "psychological distance theory" [9]. Aesthetic distance refers to the relationship between aesthetic subject and aesthetic object. Aesthetic distance is an important index to measure the literary value of works, which affects readers' reading expectations to a great extent. When the distance is too close: if the readers' reading experience is consistent with their horizon of expectation, then they will feel that the work is lack of novelty and excitement. On the contrary, if the work is beyond readers' expected field of horizon, then they will feel excited. Thus this new experience enriches and broadens the horizon of expectation. When the distance is too far, the aesthetic subject will out of touch with the aesthetic object. Aesthetic distance must be appropriate so that aesthetic activities will be produced and readers can obtain aesthetic feelings.

3.2.3. Fusion of Horizon

Fusion of horizon was put forward by Hans Gadamer, a famous scholar in contemporary hermeneutics, to illustrate the interaction between the text and its interpreter. The field of view is "the area within the reach of vision, including all things observed from a particular point of view" [10]. Both the text and the interpreter have their own horizons, and the process in which they cross their own boundaries and become one with each other is horizon fusion. In terms of reception theory, the horizon of expectation is not fixed, but varies from person to person, constantly changing with the continuous development of the times. Only when the reader's horizon of expectations is integrated with the text field of horizon of literary works can there be acceptance and understanding. This is an important principle in reception theory.

4. Analysis of the Subtitle Translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* from the Reception Theory Perspective

In this chapter, the author will analyze the subtitle translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* from the perspective of reception theory, including three aspects: horizon of expectation, aesthetic distance and fusion of horizon.

4.1. From the Aspect of Horizon of Expectation

Due to the limitation of time and space, subtitle translation should not increase the length of the text as much as possible. In reception theory, the type of the text, the intention of the author and the purpose of the translation and so on all influence the subtitle translation. But when translating, the translator should take the expectation horizon of audience into consideration. How the translator pays attention to the target audiences and satisfies the audiences' expectation are of great significance to our study of subtitle translation.

Example 1: The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Translation: 返老还童

The English title of the film is *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, and some translation is 《本杰明·巴顿奇事》, but the translation of 《返老还童》 has a larger audience. Free translation is used here and there are many advantages. First of all, 《本杰明·巴顿奇事》 has an English name, which makes people feel the obscurity after literal translation of loanwords.

While for Chinese, four-character idioms, or quatrains or rhythmic poems with five or seven words are more catchy. 返老还童 is an idiom, simple and clear, and it is easier to accept. Secondly, the title of 《返老还童》 fits very well with the inverted and retrograde life trajectory of the protagonist of the film. Finally, the idiom of 返老还童 comes from ancient legends, expressing people's desire for immortality and rejuvenation at that time. Generation people also want to stay young and energetic, so the topic of 《返老还童》 is more attractive to the audience.

Example 2: You can be as a mad dog at the way things went. You could swear, curse the fates. But when it comes to the end, you have to let go.

Translation:

不顺心的时候，你可以像疯狗一样发狂，可以破口大骂，诅咒命运，但到头来，还是得放手。

Life is a journey to leave, we should learn to cherish and let go. The meaning of life may be to leave. Because those who leave, we know how important they are. But don't wait until you lose it to cherish it. It's like this sentence that has been repeated several times in the movie. In terms of this translation, the translator adopts inversion and free translation, makes it easy to read, resonate with the audience and satisfy their expectation, which tells us we should let go those who cannot let go, let those who no longer return to leave.

Example 3: It was one of the happiest times of my life.

Translation: 那是我生命中最快乐的时光。

In the spring of 1962, Daisy was 37 and Benjamin was 43. They met again at the midpoint of life. This time they fell in love unreservedly, went to sea together, decorated the new house, moved into the new house, and raised their daughter. Later, in order to avoid the burden of his reverse growth on his family and loved ones, Benjamin chose to leave. So he said "it was one of the happiest times of my life". The skill of omission is adopted in this translation. The translator omits "one of" and describes it "it was the happiest times of my life", which satisfies audiences' expectations, that is, they finally have a good time together.

Example 4: Some people are born to sit by a river. Some get struck by lightning. Some have an ear for music. Some are artists. Some swim. Some know buttons. Some know Shakespeare. Some are mothers. And some people dance.

Translation:

有些人生来，就注定可以悠闲地坐在河边；有些人会被雷电击中；有些人会音乐；有些人是艺术家；有些人是游泳健将；有些人，懂纽扣；有些人，懂莎士比亚；有些人是妈妈；有些人，是舞者。

This example is the heroine's self-account. How you view the passage of life determines what kind of path you will take. God is fair to everyone, giving you time to do what you really want to do, even if everyone's talents are different, even if their experiences are different, they all have the opportunity to have a valuable life. Time can not go back, we all have to choose to be what kind of person. In terms of translation, free translation is used here. The original text has a variety of sentence patterns, but the translation is neat and easy to read, which is in line with the Chinese audience's aesthetic expectation. Besides, if "sit by a river" is translated literally, much philosophy meaning will be lost.

4.2. From the Aspect of Aesthetic Distance

Reception theory says the social effect of the subtitle translation and attaches importance to the active acceptance of readers, which are of great importance. The main function of films is to entertain audience. Good subtitle translation can assist individuals appreciate the meaning of the film and attract more people in order to make profits. Reception theory emphasizes that aesthetic distance is the criterion of translation, and holds that there is a certain distance

between the translation and the source text, and between the translation and the reader, which are not only interrelated but also restrict each other.

Example 5: I thought I'd come here, and sweep you off your feet or something.

Translation: 我本以为来这儿会让你惊喜。

The original meaning of "sweep you off your feet" is "to win an overwhelming victory". When Benjamin went to New York to see Daisy, Daisy only cared about herself and was unhappy to Benjamin's sudden arrival. So Benjamin said this sentence. Benjamin always gives a sense of composure in the film, so the translator adopts the skill of omission and it would be better to reduce the translation to“我本以为来这儿会让你惊喜。” In terms of audience's expectations, they may hope Daisy was happy to Benjamin's arrival. However, it is a pity for audience to see an awkward reunion of them. This is an example when the aesthetic distance between subject and object is too close and aesthetic distance of the audience is beyond their horizon of expectation, which makes audience obtain new aesthetic feelings and makes their reunion more impressed in audiences' heart.

Example 6: What are you thinking? Well. I was thinking how nothing lasts.

Translation: 你在想什么? 我在想, 为什么世上没有永恒呢。

Life is impermanent, only change is eternal. From the old state of childhood, Benjamin gradually grew up and became young. Although he was contrary to the growth of others, he was the same as others in the impermanence and change of life. In terms of the expectation of the audience, they may hope Benjamin and Daisy will love forever and there is no obstruction of age. However, while Benjamin was getting younger, Daisy was getting older day by day, and both of them had to face the impermanence of life. Obviously, it is also an example when the aesthetic distance between audience and film is too close. It just shows that the aesthetic distance of the audience is beyond their horizon of expectation. Through the negation of familiar experience, it results in a change of vision, enriches and broadens new horizons and expectations. The translation employs free translation and precisely reflects that life is like this, there is no eternity, only impermanence and change, even love is no exception.

Example 7: They had the finest clock maker in all of the south to built that glorious clock. His name was Mr. Gateau... Mr. Cake.

Translation:

还请来整个南方最好的钟表匠建了那座雄伟的大钟。那人叫盖图先生.....蛋糕先生 (盖图/Gateau在法语中是蛋糕之意)

Example 8: Papa said there were people everywhere. Even Teddy Roosevelt came.

Translation:

爸爸说那天人山人海, 连泰迪罗斯福也来了。(西奥多·罗斯福, 昵称泰迪, 美国第26任总统)

In order to faithfully express the meaning and style of the original text, and the translation accords with the habit of expression, some words must be added in the translation to make the text more vivid and easy for the audience to understand and conform to the audience's cognition. What's more, if there are some obscure contents or technical terms in the original text, it is necessary for the translator to explain these contents, that is, to add their specific meanings in parentheses during translation, so as to avoid difficulties in understanding due to ambiguity of information. This is also responsible for subtitle translation. In this way, addition and explanatory translation is quite necessary. These two sentences are the examples when the audiences' aesthetic distance is too far with the film. In both of the above examples, the comments added by the translation itself are in parentheses. In the former example, "Mr. Cake" suddenly appeared, and in the latter example, how President Roosevelt could be called "Teddy Roosevelt" would make it difficult for the target language audience to understand. Although the use of translation notes makes the translation numerous, it is the best way to clearly explain

the cross-cultural ambiguity, which makes audience much easily to reduce aesthetic distance so as the aesthetic subject will not out of touch with the aesthetic object.

Example 9: Don't be a chicken. Light it.

Translation: 别这么胆小, 快点。

This example is chosen from a dialogue between Benjamin and Daisy. This is also an example when the aesthetic distance between the subject and the object is too far because there are different connotation of "chicken" in Chinese culture and western culture. In terms of this translation, the translator adopts free translation, which precisely expresses the real meaning of this sentence. When translated into the target language, we should take into account the impact of the film on the target language audience or target language audience will lose contact with the meaning of the film, not to mention having expectation horizon and achieving fusion of horizons.

4.3. From the Aspect of Fusion of Horizon

Under the influence of thinking patterns and habits, people gradually shape a specific form of expression in which language can understand each other in communication. Sometimes, the source language and the target language can be translated literally while in some cases the source language and the target language can not be translated literally. In the process of translating film subtitles, we should not only keep the original flavor as much as possible, that is, faithfulness, but also take into account the habitual language awareness of the target language audience. How the translator pays attention to the target readers and promotes their fusion of horizons are of great significance to our study of English subtitle translation.

Example 10: You know, you might've got a few more years out, but you chose something so special and unique that there was only a short window of time you could do it.

Translation:

也许, 你能够多跳几年舞, 可你的事业太与众不同, 只有几年的黄金时间可以发展。

Benjamin and Daisy finally met again in the old place on a quiet afternoon. This time, without too much hesitation, they directly experienced a happy and sweet time together. Daisy was mentally unbalanced because she could not continue to dance, which was a consolation from Benjamin. In this sentence, the translator adopts omission and free translation, which makes the translation condensed into a four-character idiom. In addition, the original text says that dance is a special industry. I think it is more accurate to use "与众不同". And it is more appropriate to use "黄金时间" to explain the age limit of the dance industry. "You know" does not carry any real meaning in the sentence and can be omitted from translation. In this way, the translation is much accord with the Chinese audience's expressing habits so that they can understand the Daisy's situation, which brings the audience closer to the protagonist and achieve the fusion of horizon.

Example 11: Our lives are defined by opportunities.

Translation: 我们的生命因为各种各样的机遇而变得更有意义。

Everyone has a different understanding of themselves to some extent, but we all go to the same place in the end and just take different paths. So as his mother Mrs. Queenie said, "everyone feels different about themselves, but the end of our lives is the same." The translation of this sentence employs addition translation, extending the meaning of "confined" and making it more definite, which explains its real meaning. Besides, the plural sense of opportunity is translated, making the sentence even more powerful for Chinese audience to read. The accurate subtitle translation enlightens the audience, which pulls into the audience's aesthetic distance, promotes the audiences' horizon of expectation and achieves the fusion of horizon.

Example 12: We're meant to lose the people we love. How else would we know how important they are to us?

Translation: 我们是注定要失去所爱之人的，不然如何知道他们对我们的重要性？

There was a madam, but Benjamin forgot her name. She taught him to play the piano and what it meant to miss somebody. When she cut Benjamin's hair, she found Benjamin had more hair. At that time, Benjamin also noticed that he was getting younger and younger. However, The madam didn't feel happy for him but feel sorry for him because she thought Benjamin had to see everyone he loved died before he did. Indeed, it's an awful responsibility and no one would think about life or death that way. To comfort Benjamin, she said this sentence. And in the next shoot, the old lady died when Benjamin wanted her to go with him to the drugstore. Benjamin lost an important person to his life and maybe at that time, he also understood the meaning of this sentence. The translator adopts literal translation, and this philosophical remark enlightens everyone at once, which advances the audiences' expectation and easily achieve their fusion of horizon.

Example 13: I'm blind in the eye one, can't hardly hear, get twitches and shakes out of nowhere, always losing my line of thought. But you know what? God keeps reminding me I'm lucky to be alive.

Translation: 我一只眼瞎了，耳朵也快不行了，总是不由自主地颤抖，脑子总是很糊涂，但你知道吗？上帝一直在提醒我，我能活着就是幸运。

In the movie, there was a man struck by lightning seven times but he was still alive. Compared to be dead, it is a lucky thing to be alive. In terms of this sentence's translation, the translator adopts literal translation, which fully takes Chinese expressing habits into account and makes it easier for Chinese audiences to read so that the audience will realize the importance of life and the strength of life. Watching the man experiencing several hard times, the audience still hope that he will be strongly alive. They're also glad to see that the man is optimistic to life. In this way, the audiences' horizon of expectation is integrated with the text field of horizon of the movie, so the fusion of horizon is achieved and the translation is accepted and understood.

5. Conclusion

As a modern medium, film plays a significant role in transmission and promotion of culture for people from different countries and with the fast-developed Internet, plenty of foreign films are introduced to China. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is really a brilliant film and the author likes it very much. Film subtitle translation is not only a kind of cross-cultural communication activity, but also should be flexible, taking full account of the type of film, the interests of the audience, cultural literacy and so on. In this thesis, the author introduces the reception theory to the subtitle translation of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* and analyzes the subtitle translation in this film from three aspects of the reception theory in order to find out the advantages of the translation used in the film as well as some suggestions in the subtitle translation of this type of films. The main contents of the study in this thesis include how the translator shows concerns for target readers, satisfies audiences' horizon of expectations, pays attention to aesthetic distance between the audience and the subtitle translation and helps audiences to achieve fusion of horizons, which will be of great significance. Finally, the author believes that when translating film subtitles, translators should fully take into account the cultural habits and aesthetic preferences of the audience and respect the centrality and expectation of the audience, so as to make the film subtitles more easily accepted by the target language audience. However, it is a pity that there are some limitations in this thesis. First, as the author paid attention to the film language features, cultural and aesthetic perspectives of film subtitle translation, apart from the frequently-seen aspects, there is still experience worthy of learning. Second, this thesis just analyzes the translation of English film's subtitles into Chinese from the perspective of reception theory. In practice, there are many other areas are worthy of studying, but due to space limit, the author does not pay attention to further study.

The author hopes further researchers can make better research on this film and make researches on other areas of the same type film.

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