

# Application of Teleology in the Subtitle Translation of The Flash (Season 1)

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**Abstract:** *The teleology of translation, or Skopos Theory, is a theory of translation proposed by the German functionalist school in the 1970s. Its central idea is that the most important factor in the translation process is the purpose of the overall translation behavior, and based on this core idea, it proposes three basic laws: the law of purpose, the law of coherence, and the law of fidelity. The principle of purpose is based on the first place, that is, the most important foothold of the translation is the purpose of the translation. Nowadays, teleology has been applied to major translation works and has become an irreplaceable translation theory. This paper will discuss the specific performance of the translation teleology in the American drama "The Flash" (season 1), and comprehensively analyze the application of the three major rules in subtitles, hoping to help the future translation work.*

**Keywords:** Subtitle translation; Translation teleology; The Flash.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's era, the process of globalization is accelerating and evolving. The cultural collision between countries is inevitable and escalating. With the growing maturity of Internet technology, people can learn about the customs of foreign countries without leaving home [1]. The function of subtitles is obvious: to provide information. As an important means of understanding foreign cultures, TV dramas have been increasingly accepted and recognized by audiences for their use of the "native+subtitle" translation method. Subtitle translation with witty remarks and down-to-earth line explanations can provide the audience with a deeper understanding of the characters' psychological emotions and cultural backgrounds in the play. Excellent subtitle translation can be regarded as the finishing touch of a TV drama, which can not only help the audience integrate into the historical background faster, but also increase their desire to watch the drama. In the science fiction TV series "The Flash" (season one), the application of teleology is almost always present.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE FLASH

The male protagonist Barry Allen once had a happy family, but at the age of 11, he witnessed a terrifying scene: her mother was surrounded by two lightning bolts and ultimately died tragically. And because the murderer could not be found, his father was found by the police to have murdered his wife and was forced to go to jail. His father's close friend, detective Joe West, adopted him. Years later, Barry grew up and joined the local police station as a judicial technical appraiser, but his true purpose was to find the real culprit behind his mother's murder and clear his father's name. During this period, he saw various urban rumors and witnessed various advanced technologies.

During a job, Barry saw the particle accelerator developed by scientist Harrison Wells and his S.T.A.R. laboratory, a technology that would bring a revolutionary change to human society. However, on its first day of operation, the particle accelerator malfunctioned and triggered a storm that swept across the entire city. Barry Allen was struck by lightning in this incident and fell into a coma.

Nine months later, Barry Allen finally woke up and benefited from his misfortune, gaining extremely high speed. He decided to use this power to protect the city. And S.T.A.R.'s laboratory partners also decided to join him. However, he soon realized that he was not the only one who had descended from heaven. There were also many people in the city who had gained superpowers due to particle accelerator explosions, and the number of missing accidents and unknown deaths in the central city was rapidly increasing.

As he delved deeper into the investigation, the situation became increasingly perplexing. The red lightning that once killed his mother finally appeared, constantly disrupting Barry's plan, but was eventually caught by Barry and his companions. In the end, he traveled through time and space to see his mother for the last time, but in fact, Barry's story had just begun

### 3. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF TRANSLATION PURPOSE THEORY IS INTERPRETATION

#### 3.1 Rule of Purpose

As the foremost of the three laws, the principle of purpose is the core principle of teleology. Any translation behavior is determined by the purpose of translation, in short, the purpose of translation determines the means of translation, that is, relying on the translator to clarify their translation strategy according to their own translation purpose and freely choose the translation method. This rule has epoch-making significance and provides a good solution to the long-standing debates in the translation industry regarding literal translation and free translation, functional equivalence, and formal equivalence. There are usually three purposes of translation: the basic purpose of the translator, the communicative purpose of the translation, and the specific translation strategies and means to achieve the objectives. In translation purpose theory, "purpose" is usually the first type, which is the communicative purpose of the translation.

#### 3.2 Consistency Rule

In addition to the principle of purpose, the translation must also follow the principle of coherence. The coherence rule refers to the requirement that the translated text must conform to the coherence within the language. The coherence rule requires translators to consider the context of the target language, so that their translation is more in line with the language text of the target language, conforms to the language habits of the target language, and the translation process is free of grammatical errors and cultural barriers, making it easier for readers to accept.

#### 3.3 Law of Loyalty

In addition to the principles of purposiveness and coherence, translators must also adhere to the principle of fidelity, also known as interlingual coherence. The fidelity rule requires that the translated text and the original text be coherent and interconnected, that is, the translated text and the original text should be consistent.

### 4. SUBTITLE TRANSLATION OF "THE FLASH" SEASON 1 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SKOPOS THEORY

Subtitle translation is an important means and channel for the dissemination of foreign film and television works in China. For the general public, English only needs to be used as a simple means of communication, and there is no need to delve too deeply into it. There is no need to consider language differences, lifestyle habits, and cultural differences in foreign countries. But for subtitle translation, these three points are particularly crucial. If the subtitle translation can not even be understood by the native people, the audience rating of the film and television works will also be greatly reduced.

#### 4.1 Application of the Rule of Purpose in The Flash (Season 1)

The purposive rule holds that any translation action is determined by the purpose of translation. The communicative purpose of translation is also the fundamental purpose of translation. It can be said that most translation behaviors revolve around communicative purposes. The subtitle translation in the first season of 'The Flash' is also the same.

**Example 1:** And one day, I will find who killed my mother, and get justice for my father

**Translation:** One day, I will find the murderer of my mother and clear my father's name.

Analysis: This sentence is one of the opening remarks that Barry always says in every episode. Seemingly unremarkable, it showcases Barry's most genuine desires and goals. In the sentence, the object clause guided by "who" should have been translated as "the person who killed my mother". But changing the translation to 'the murderer of my mother' is easier to understand and expresses Barry's inner anger towards the murderer. The most wonderful thing is the latter half of the sentence, 'get justice for' originally means to uphold justice. The literal translation should be 'To uphold justice for my father'. But the translation here as 'let my father be vindicated' further reflects that Barry's father was wrongfully imprisoned, and Barry wants to clear his father's name and let

the truth be revealed to the world. At the same time, the four character idiom "Grievance gets snow" is also more consistent with the Chinese language expression habits. The simple four characters make it easier for readers to understand the plot, convey the central idea, and meet the purpose of communication.

**Example 2:** It's going to take days to figure out which one, let Barry do his thing

**Translation:** It will take some time to find out which one is lost, let Barry start working.

**Analysis:** This sentence occurred in a building in the central city where a theft case occurred. Barry and his adoptive father Joe Weiss had a conversation when they came to investigate. This sentence comes from the mouth of Joe Weiss, and its deeper meaning is to support outsiders around him and create an opportunity for Barry to investigate the case alone. And there are two phrases in this sentence that use the principle of purpose. They are 'take days' and 'do his job' respectively. Firstly, in the first place, 'take days' means 'spend a few days' if translated literally. However, translating it in this way would be unreasonable. Therefore, it is more appropriate to translate it as 'spend some time' and determine the translation method according to one's own translation purpose, making it easier for the target language readers to understand the context. The second phrase 'do his job' is also the same, 'do one's job' refers to doing one's job. If translated literally here, it would be difficult to understand. So the translation here as 'Let Barry start working' indicates who 'his' is, making it easier for the audience to understand. It also expresses actions that meet the communicative purpose of translation in the principle of purpose.

**Example 3:** Don't deny you were there. Officer Vukovich saw you

**Translation:** Don't try to deny it. Officer Vukovic saw you.

**Analysis:** This conversation takes place in a scene where detective Joe Weiss is at home with his daughter Iris. As a journalist, Iris often goes to crime scenes for on-site interviews. As a detective, Joe Weiss knew how dangerous the scene was, and as a father, he didn't want his daughter to risk her life. So when I heard my daughter lying, I said this sentence. This is a conversation between a father and his daughter, so the translation does not need to be too serious and rigid, but should reflect the feelings between father and daughter. If translated as 'Don't try to deny you went there.' it is too rigid and rigid, so the translator has a domestication translation method that considers the feelings of the target language readers and translates it as 'Don't try to deny.' This is a very Chinese spoken expression and often appears in informal situations. This corresponds well to the basic purpose of translation.

#### 4.2 Application of Coherence Rule in The Flash (Season 1)

The coherence rule refers to the translator fully considering the cultural characteristics and language habits of the Chinese audience in the translation process, in order to achieve coherence within the language, making the subtitles easy to understand and more convenient for the audience to accept.

**Example 1:** A VA file number is all the information you have on the bomber?

**Translation:** Regarding the bomber, did you only find a file number?

**Analysis:** This sentence fully embodies the application of the coherence rule. In spoken language, there are significant differences between Chinese and English in terms of language structure and grammar. Chinese is full of flowing sentences, loose sentences, and tight sentences, and has a bamboo like structure; In English, there are often passive voices and tree like structures. Therefore, when doing subtitle translation, it is necessary to fully consider the differences between the two. This sentence uses domestication method, reversing the word order and changing the translation of some words. Chinese tends to place key information at the beginning, so adverbials are placed at the beginning as emphasis. At the same time, adding a subject makes the sentence read more smoothly, adjusting the word order, and translating the main structure of the sentence. Finally, it was integrated into a sentence that conforms to Chinese language habits, making the sentence simple and easy to understand, making it easier for Chinese audiences to understand the context, and achieving coherence within the language.

**Example 2:** With the ability to cause sporadic outbreak, upon tact contact

**Translation:** With just a gentle touch, one can unconsciously cause an explosion.

Analysis: This sentence is Harrison Wells' explanation of a superpower who can make bombs at will. The translator here used a free translation of 'tact contact', translating it as 'lightly touched', which is more in line with Chinese word combinations and reads more fluently. The translation method of the four character grid is used here. The "four character grid" can be said to be a unique structure in Chinese, with a simple structure but more rich in conveying emotions and meanings. Language is concise but also better able to convey visual effects. The four character grid can be seen everywhere in Chinese, and using it for translation here is also in line with the usage of Chinese. The balance and coherence within the language make the translation logical and meaningful in the context, in accordance with the principle of coherence.

#### **4.3 Application of Loyalty Rule in The Flash (Season 1)**

The fidelity of the translator to the original text depends on the purpose of the translation. If subtitle translation is intended to convey communicative purposes, it can be as close to the original text as possible to achieve fidelity. If there is no communication or cultural expression, it can be slightly adapted to the original text. This greatly increases the possibility of translation.

**Example 1:** About ten years ago, general Wade Eiling contacted S.T.A.R. lab to develop enhanced gene therapies for soldiers and I was interested in the potential medical benefits for civilians.

**Translation:** About ten years ago, General Wade Eileen contacted a cutting-edge technology laboratory, hoping that advanced gene therapy for soldiers' appearance could be beneficial to the medical industry, which interested me a lot.

Analysis: This sentence is Harrison Wells' account of a previous collaboration experience with General Wade Eileen. This sentence may seem long, but it's not difficult to understand. The translator only used the simplest literal translation method. Although it is a literal translation, it still retains the language characteristics of the original text, achieving the maximum degree of conformity to the original text, adhering to the principle of fidelity, and thus achieving the purpose of communication.

**Example 2:** Our entire lives, you couldn't scream loud enough that the impossible exists

**Translation:** We cannot prove the impossible in our lifetime.

Analysis: Here are the words spoken by Iris to Barry. Barry hopes to protect Iris' safety and does not want Iris to post a blog that puts him in danger. However, Iris does not know that Barry is the Flash and instead retorts. The translator here completely deviates from the original text, translating 'scream loud enough' as 'proof'. Seemingly lacking in meaning and not following the principle of fidelity, it actually satisfies the communicative purpose of translation. If a literal translation is chosen here, it may not instantly help the audience understand the intended meaning of the original text. Because nobody is familiar with 'scream loud enough'. Literal translation actually leads to misunderstandings. Choosing paraphrasing here yields the best results.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Movies are an art form that combines sound and art, and the original intention of film and television subtitle translation is to fully consider the audience of various cultural backgrounds, in order to facilitate the audience's understanding and appreciation of the work. Through analysis, it is not difficult to see that translation purpose theory has a highly guiding role in film and television subtitle translation. Translators need to consider the three principles of teleology when translating film and television subtitles, namely the principle of purpose, the principle of coherence, and the principle of fidelity. From the perspective of the target language audience, the subtitles should be more in line with the target language culture, easy to understand, and rich in connotation. Enable the audience to engage in cross-cultural communication while enjoying the film.

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