

# A Study of Subtitle Translation in *Forrest Gump* from the Perspective of Relevance Theory

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## **Abstract:**

Recent years, the Chinese film market has welcomed lots of excellent western films, which greatly promotes exchanges among different countries and regions, and makes the study and discussion of subtitle translation very important. Through studying the subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump*, this paper explores the guiding significance of relevance theory in subtitle translation from the perspective of context, ostensive-inferential communication and optimal relevance in relevance theory, so as to illustrate the feasibility of relevance theory in subtitle translation. The Chinese subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump* comes from the National Radio and Television Administration, and 15 examples are selected. Through the analysis of translation examples, it is found that the Chinese-translated subtitles in the film have the optimal relevance with the source language subtitles. In this way, with the least effort, the Chinese audience can understand and appreciate the film, and the best contextual effect is achieved accordingly.

**Key words:** Relevance Theory; subtitle translation; *Forrest Gump*

## Introduction

Entering into the 21st century, people are eager to enrich spiritual world with the development of living standards, which results in more outstanding English movies pouring into China. This promotes the transmission of excellent films, and what's more important is that, people enable to communicate with others who come from different countries and regions. This paper is going to study the subtitle of the famous English movie *Forrest Gump* based on the relevance theory, and at the same time, this study aims to discuss the guiding significance of the relevance theory to the subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump*. Relevance theory is the basis of cognitive pragmatics, aiming at identifying the intrinsic mechanism existing in human psychology, thus explaining the way of human communication, that is, communicators show their information intentions to the communicative partners through communicative intentions. According to the relevance theory, communication is an ostensive-inferential communication.

From the perspective of context, ostensive-inferential communication and optimal relevance in the relevance theory, this paper explores the guiding significance of the relevance theory in the subtitle translation so as to illustrate the feasibility of relevance theory in subtitle translation. In this paper, the Chinese subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump* comes from National Radio and Television Administration, and 15 examples are selected, to find out whether the subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump* is under the guidance of relevance theory. Through the analysis of these examples, it is found that the Chinese-translated subtitles in the film have the optimal relevance with the source language subtitles. The audience can understand and appreciate the film with the least effort, and achieve the best contextual effect.

## Chapter I: Task Description

### 1.1 A brief introduction to the source text

*Forrest Gump*, as a classic inspirational film, tells the story of a retarded child. Although the IQ of the hero of the film, Forrest Gump, is only 75, he has led an extraordinary life.

In his life, Forrest has achieved many accomplishments that ordinary people cannot imagine. For example, after the Vietnam War, Forrest Gump was received as a hero by President Johnson; he reported the eavesdropper of the Watergate incident; he came to China as a member of the all-American ping-pong team and made a contribution to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States and so on. Forrest has experienced various historical periods in which the world has changed, but whenever and wherever he is, he is still simple and kind.

As a biographical film, the subtitles of this film are mostly based on dialogues and the narration of the protagonist Forrest Gump. The original English subtitles in the film are rich in language and diverse in sentence patterns, for example, the slang, the English of African American and the special English from Forrest. Consequently, all of this contributes to many famous words in this film, just like "Life was like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get."

## 1.2 The features of the source text

In this paper, the original English and Chinese translation subtitles in the American film *Forrest Gump* are selected as the research objects, and the application of the relevance theory in the subtitle translation of this film is discussed.

Subtitle and other literary works have something in common, that is, to express the superb artistic conception in image in a visualized language. Because the film and television works are the comprehensive art of sound and picture mainly based on images. And the translation of subtitle translators is inevitably subject to time and space constraints. Time refers to the synchronization of language and picture, that is to say, the subtitle needs to complete the information transmission in the same time as the source language utterance. Therefore, the subtitle language has the characteristics of instantness, in other words, the subtitle text flashes on the screen, and the audience cannot read it like a book. Space refers to the number of linguistic symbols that can be accommodated on the screen. The subtitles generally do not exceed two lines, so the number of words displayed is very limited, which determines the simplicity and unintentional features of the subtitle language.

## 1.3 The significance of this thesis

Western film and television works continue to flood into the Chinese market as an important medium for Chinese and foreign exchanges. Due to differences in language and culture, in order to meet the cultural needs of more Chinese people, subtitle translation has gradually become a field of literary translation, playing an important role in bridges between Chinese and foreign cultural exchanges.

As a successful film, *Forrest Gump* tells the story of the inferior protagonist Forrest Gump, who started the “running” of life with the “sun-streaker” given by God, becoming an olive superstar, a hero of the Vietnam War, Ping Pong Ball diplomat, rich man, etc. The film won six prizes in the 67th Oscar for Best Picture in 1994, the Oscar for Best Actor, and the Oscar for Best Director. This excellent American film is loved by the Chinese audience and its excellent subtitle translation is closely related. Through the translator’s excellent translation, the Chinese audience can understand the intent of the source language subtitles more deeply, and thus achieve the best context effect, so that this film has won a large number of loyal fans in China, greatly promoting intercultural exchanges between different countries.

With the purpose of enriching the previous studies, this paper is meant to give a detailed description about the optimal context effect, which is achieved in accordance with the relevance theory. On the one hand, in this thesis, the significance of relevance theory is explored in depth, which reveals the important role the relevance theory has played in subtitle translation practice. Thus more attention will be paid on this translation theory and subtitle translation practice in future. And on the other hand, as the films becoming increasingly indispensable in the age of globalization, this paper contributes to enhancing the successful cross-cultural communication with the representative of the information exchanges in *Forrest Gump*.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### 2.1 Research at home

In China, the practice of subtitle translation has not been touching in the nearly half century from the late 1940s and 1980s. Affected by this, China's subtitle translation research has basically no progress, and the related research results are few traces. Fortunately, with the rise of "dribbling translation" and "network translation" at the end of the 20th century, subtitle translation has returned to the brink, so does the subtitle translation research.

*"It is worth mentioning that many scholars believe that the earliest scholars in China to study subtitle translation are Professor Qi Bingkun (1994), Professor Ma Zhengqi (1997) or Professor Zhang Chunbai (1998). In fact, this kind of view is not totally correct. Strictly speaking, the research objects of the above scholars still belong to the category of 'dubbing translation' rather than 'subtitle translation'."* (Deng, 2018)

*"According to our investigation, the earliest subtitle translation research in China appeared in A brief discussion on the translation of film and television scripts."* (Gao,1998). Although this article is not specifically for subtitle translation, it explicitly requires the translation of "Chinese subtitle translation" for the first time: a) Subtitle translation should be synchronized with lines. b) The number of subtitle translation words should be limited. c) The minimum time is a must for subtitle translation and subtitle translation.d) Subtitle translation should convey the full meaning and so on. (Gao,1998) In addition, China's first paper specifically for subtitle translation is *Strategy for Subtitle Translation* (Li, 2001). This paper analyzes the characteristics of subtitle translation from three aspects: time and space constraints, information functions and cultural factors, and proposes corresponding subtitle translation strategy.

Starting with the above research, China's subtitle translation research has begun. Liu Dayan (2011) found through investigation that the research on the subtitle translation has sharply increased since 2005, and by 2008 it has far exceeded the discussion of traditional translations. In recent years, Chinese subtitle translation research has achieved a series of achievements in the principles and techniques of subtitle translation, research through linguistics and cultural perspectives. However, it is undeniable that compared with western countries, there is still a huge gap in the study of subtitle translation in China. For example, there is still a lack of systematic research on subtitle translation. There are few studies on the subtitle translation of the hearing impaired, and there is no specific research on subtitle translation and so on. As a result, with the representation of American film *Forrest Gump*, this paper will analyze the subtitle translation from the relevance theory to enrich the subtitle translation research.

### 2.2 Research abroad

In the field of translation studies, especially in the West, subtitle translation is attracting more attention of scholars, which contributes to the related research is increasing. The practice of subtitle translation was first developed along with movies, especially the invention of sound films and the

development of cross-cultural communication. The original form of subtitles is the “intertitle” popular in the “silent era”, first appeared in the film *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* shown in 1903.

The first study of subtitle translation in the west is Dollerup’s article titled *On Subtitles in Television Programs* published on *Babel* in 1974. In the essay *Features of Oral and Written Communication in Subtitling*, Alexandra Assis Rosa holds that the subtitling transfers to written verbal language a source text which in most instances equivalent to face-to-face communication, consequently, the process of subtitling consists of not only of verbal signs but also of non-verbal signs. Gottlieb is also a leading expert in the field of subtitle translation. He has contributed a lot to the strategies and techniques of subtitle translation and the detailed study of the language of subtitle translation and subtitle translation in his works, such as *Transfer Linguistiques et Audiovisual* (1993), *Language and Media*(1996) and so on.

In addition, there are many western scholars who have made great contributions to the study of subtitle translation. It is precisely because of their outstanding achievements that they have laid the foundation for today’s subtitle research. However, some researchers have only emphasized the importance of the original text in source language or the reaction of the movie viewer in the study of subtitle translation. For example, Ali Hajimohammadi (2004) put forward a viewer-oriented, image-bound approach to subtitling in his book *The Viewer as the Focus of Subtitling: Towards a viewer-oriented Approach*. Therefore, through the guidance of relevance theory, this paper will systematically link the roles of source language, translation language and audience, because all three are the center of subtitle translation.

### **Chapter III: Relevance Theory**

#### **3.1 A brief introduction to relevance theory**

Relevance theory is the basis of cognitive pragmatics. Its purpose is to identify the internal mechanisms that exist in human psychology, and thus to explain the way of human communication.

“*Communication is the generation of a stimulus, which can be either a verbal form or a non-verbal form.*” (Sperber & Wilson: 1986/1995: 29 ) Relevance theory proposes an ostensive-inferential communication model that replaces the traditional code communication model. Ostensive-inferential communication actually refers to two aspects of communication. Ostension refers to the communicative behavior of the speaker, and inference refers to the communicative behavior of the listener in order to identify the intention of the speaker. The ostensive-inferential behavior means that the communicator expresses his or her information to the two parties through communication intentions. The successful communication lies in the audience’s identification of the information intention.

### 3.2 The development of relevance theory

In 1986, the French linguist Sperber and the British linguist Wilson proposed the theory of relevance between cognition and communication. Relevance theory believes that relevance drives language communication. When receiving comprehension utterances, because new information has associated properties, people will process the new information in a changing context. The mutual understanding and relevance of the two sides of communication are the key to successful communication. Finding the best connection between discourse and contextual hypothesis, inferring the context concealment, and obtaining sufficient contextual effect, can achieve the success of the transaction. Contextual effect refers to the change of cognitive environment caused by the new information of receptor processing and the old information (context hypothesis or cognitive hypothesis) in the original brain. Under the same conditions, the greater the contextual effect, the less effort people have to process to handle new information, and the stronger the relevance. Because of the communicative and pragmatic nature of translation, relevance theory can explain and guide translation practice well.

In 1988, Wilson's student Gutt first published a related translation theory paper, and later proposed relevance theory to explain all translation phenomena. Chinese scholar Zhao Yanchun believes that relevance theory is the most covert theory to explain translation activities so far, with the strongest explanatory power. Relevance theory believes that the principle of association restricts the whole process of translation. Both the translator and the target reader need to find the best association in the process of processing new information, and obtain the context effect, so as to obtain the original intention. Since the original author and the target reader have great differences in cognitive assumptions, the translator must coordinate to make the original author's intention and the target reader's knowledge basically the same.

### 3.3 Context in relevance theory

*“Relevance theory believes that context is a series of assumptions used by listeners to understand discourse.”*(Gutt:1988) And according to Wang Jianguo(2009), the context is a kind of psychological structure and a part of the audience's vision of the world; dynamic rather than static; selected rather than given. It is the idea, not the true state of the world that affects the understanding of discourse. And he thinks that the context is not limited to the current physical environment or the understanding of the immediately adjacent words. It also contains logical, linguistic, and encyclopedic knowledge in the context of discourse audience perception.

The context of relevance theory is dynamic, which is reflected in the process of understanding the discourse. In the process of discourse comprehension, the listener's vision of time exists in the form of conceptual representation in the brain, which constitutes the cognitive environment for processing new information; when new experiences are added to the underlying context, they are established by discourse signals. The new vision and the old ideas that have been dealt with before will be combined and operated to form a new context. The context used to deal with the new vision is essentially a mixture of old ideas and new ideas that produce diverse contextual effects.

### **3.4 Optimal Relevance in relevance theory**

Relevant concept is crucial to the description of the dialogue understanding process. In language communication, the hearer establishes and processes certain assumptions related to the discourse, forming a cognitive background that changes over time, and obtaining new information from it. Discourse comprehension involves the combination and operation of two types of information, namely new hypotheses established by speech signals and hypotheses that have been processed before. The necessary condition for the combination of old and new information is that they should be related to each other: the new discourse must be related in some way to the background of the knowledge already possessed by the listener. When speaking, the speaker must abide by the principle of association and try to make the discourse relevant to the context. The listener can use the principle of association to guide the reasoning and draw conclusions about the intention of the discourse from the premise of the new and old information. Whether the discourse is related can be judged by the contextual effect it obtains by reasoning.

Relevance is a relative concept, and its degree depends on the relationship between two factors, namely the contextual effect obtained and the processing effort. The information provided by the discourse is considered to be relevant only if a reasonable balance is reached between the two. Sperber and Wilson (1986) considers that the definition of relevance of relevance theory is that under the same conditions, the greater the context effect, the closer the relation; under the same conditions, the smaller the processing effort, the stronger the correlation.

### **3.5 Ostensive-inferential Communication in relevance theory**

Relevance theory proposes an ostensive-inferential communication model that replaces the traditional code communication model. Ostensive-inferential communication actually refers to two aspects of communication: the communicative behavior of the speaker, the communicative behavior of the listener in order to identify the intention of the speaker. Relevance theory holds that ostension and inference are two aspects of a communicative process. From the perspective of the speaker, communication is an ostensive process, and from the perspective of the hearer, communication is a process of inferencing.

Translation is also an ostensive-inferential communication. However, unlike other communication, translation communication includes two ostensive-inferential communication activities. In the two ostensive-inferential communication of translation, both the original author and the translator use the communicative intention to inform their respective readers through the intention of communication. (Wang: 2000) Therefore, for the translator, it is necessary to adopt the same information intention and communication as the original author. Intention, that is, the same ostensive way of presenting ideas and mutually envisioning ideas. In the final analysis, it is necessary to ensure that the original author's assumptions about the original reader remain unchanged; at the same time, both the original reader and the translated reader rely on inferencing to obtain the original author's information intention. The translator must make the target audience's reasoning method the same as the source language reader's, so that the translated language and the

source language can be optimally correlated, and the target audience can get the optimal context effect.

## Chapter IV: A Case Study of Subtitle Translation in *Forrest Gump* from Relevance theory

In spite of many Chinese translation version facing us today, the one from *Film Bureau, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television* are chosen in this paper. On the one hand, as an authoritative organization, its translating works are accepted by the audience easily. On the other hand, there are more translation experts in it so that the quality is guaranteed. This chapter will conduct a case study on the Chinese subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump* from the perspective of the context, optimal relevance and ostensive-inferential communication based on relevance theory. In this part, 15 examples are selected and analyzed in detail. And the case study aims to analyze the application of relevance theory in the subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump* and whether the application is reasonable or not.

### 4.1 A case study of context in the subtitle translation

Context plays a vital role in communication. In the optimal relevance, the stronger the contextual effect the utterance manifests, the stronger the relevance is. Consequently, the context will drive to a successful communication. According to the relevance theory, the context has two sub-categories. The first one is linguistic context while the other one is non-linguistic context, which will be discussed below.

#### 4.1.1 Linguistic context

The meaning of the same discourse in different language environments is not exactly the same, so that the same word or sentence has very distinguished meanings in daily communication. In the subtitle translation work, translators are required to have a thorough understanding of the target language's features apart from fully comprehending the original language, and understanding the expectations of the target audience. Consequently, in subtitle translation, the subtitles finally presented to the audiences should bring the audiences with the best contextual effect on condition that the translators think about the linguistic features.

##### Example 1

Forrest: This one day, we was out walking, like always.

有一天，我们跟平常一样巡逻着。

##### Example 2

Forrest: We will take this real long walks.

我们走了很长的路。

##### Example 3

Forrest: We walked around all night.

我们走了一整夜。



In these three examples, “walk” has different meanings, namely “巡逻”, “路”, “走”, although the words presented to the audience are “walk”, but obviously, they are not the same. It means that there is a polysemy in Chinese. This is more common in English expressions, and the language context has a great influence on the meaning of these words. If the translator translates these words rigidly, this will lead to deviations in the understanding of the target audience, and the audience cannot understand the original intention after the reasoning.

In the first example, with the background that Forrest is a soldier, he and his comrades are searching with gun. It's apparent that they are on guard. Thus “walk” here is translated into “巡逻” instead of “路” or “走”. In the third example, Jenny and Forrest meet again after long separation, but they do nothing but just walk side by side for a long distance. The context of the second sentence is that as a soldier in the army, Forrest always take a long walk to search for enemies. And in this sentence, the translation “走了很长的路” is closer to the plot. From these three examples, the translator accurately conveys the meaning of the original subtitles, so that the presented Chinese subtitles more satisfy the expectations of the audience, and bring the best context effect to the audience.

#### 4.1.2 Non-Linguistic context

In addition to the influence of language context on communication, the role of non-linguistic context in communication cannot be ignored. The same words will bring different communication effects at different times, places. In intercultural communication, cultural factors are also a very important non-linguistic context. As an American film, *Forrest Gump*, which is studied in this article, is a carrier of western culture, which result in that the translator should also properly handle this feature.

##### Example 1

Man: Coons are trying to get into school.

“浣熊”也想要进学校了。

Forrest: Coons? When raccoons tried getting on our back porch. Mama just chased them off with a broom.

浣熊?如果浣熊想进我家的后院, 妈妈会用扫帚赶他们走。

##### Example 2

Forrest: And we were always looking for this guy names“Charlie”.

我们总是在寻找一个叫“越共”的家伙。

The above two sentences strongly represent cultural characteristics of western countries. “Coons” refers to the black people, and “Charlie” is the special name for the Vietnamese Communist Party in the Vietnam War. In the first example, the raccoon in the mouth of Forrest's college classmates added with quotation marks, which is a good indication to the audience that the raccoon here is really not a raccoon. However, for Forrest, the raccoon is the animal, so the raccoon in the mouth of Forrest has no quotes. In the second example, “Charlie” is translated as “越共”, and the Chinese audience is also very familiar with the term Communist Party. Therefore,

translating into “越共” is more in line with the cognitive background of the Chinese audience than “查理”.

#### Example 3

Forrest: President Kennedy met with collegiate all-American football team at the Oval office today.

肯尼迪总统在白宫接见了全美大学足球队。

In this sentence, “Oval Office” does not refer to any oval office, but the office of the US President who meets foreign leaders at the White House. This term also has a strong cultural meaning and is limited by the characteristics of the subtitles. Turning it into the White House makes the Chinese audience understand it more easily, eliminating the viewer’s visual barriers and achieving the best contextual effects.

#### Example 4

Forrest: When I got home, I was a national celebrity, famouser even than Captain Kangaroo.

回国之后，我成了全国名人，比儿童节目主持人还有名。

After the Vietnam War, Forrest comes into contact with table tennis, and he seems to have a lot of talent for playing table tennis. Therefore, he is elected to the national table tennis team, and becomes the first American to visit mainland China. He also plays an important role in improving Sino-US relations. After visiting China, Forrest is very famous in the United States. This sentence is the narration of Forrest when he participated in a talk show. “Captain Kangaroo” is an animated character in the early days of the United States, and this may be unfamiliar to the Chinese audience. Here the translator turns it into a “儿童节目主持人”, which is simple and clear, and the children’s show host is usually very popular, so the audience can naturally associate Forrest’s popularity with the children's show host to understand the intent of the original sentence.

In addition, the comparative degree of “famous” is not “more famous” but “famouser”, which against the rules of grammar. Under the normal IQ level, Forrest often has broken English in the film, the translation of this word here is not very proper for the reason that it doesn’t manifest the specificity of Forrest.

#### Example 5

Forrest: Every day we’d take a walk, and I’d jabber on like a monkey in the tree.

我们天天一起散步，我喋喋不休。

This sentence comes from the last part of the film, after the reunion of Forrest and Jenny. “jabber” itself is used to describe the noisy monkeys, but in order to let the Chinese audiences understand this sentence well, the translator simply turns the latter half into “喋喋不休” that the Chinese audiences are very familiar with. The results and contents of the sentence are clearer, and the meaning of the source language is summarized to the maximum extent, without affecting the audience’s understanding of the information content.

## 4.2 A case study of optimal relevance in the subtitle translation

The concept of relevance is relative. As mentioned in the previous chapters, the strength of relevance is related to two factors, one is the contextual effect of acquisition, and the other is the

effort to deal with discourse. Not all words are related, and only when these two factors reach equilibrium, the information provided in the discourse is considered to be relevant. According to Sperber and Wilson, under the same conditions, the greater the contextual effect, the stronger the correlation, and the smaller the processing effort, the correlation is stronger. Distinguishing between maximal relevance and optimal relevance is the focus of relevance theory research, and it should be noted that discourse causes the listener to focus on and deal with not the maximal relevance, but the optimal relevance. If the utterance produces enough contextual effects, and the listener only needs to have minimal processing effort for it, then it has the optimal relevance.

#### Example 1

Forrest: From that day on, we was always together. Jenny and me was like peas and carrots.

从那天起我们总是在一起，就像秤不离砣。

This sentence is the narration of Forrest Gump after his first encounter with Jenny.

In this sentence, “peas and carrots” is the cultural intention of the United States, because Americans often use peas and carrots for daily cooking, and there are similarities between the two. But the translator is not here to translate the “peas and carrots” into “胡萝卜和豆子” rigidly, but to find relevant phrase in Chinese culture instead. In fact, there is almost no habit of mixing peas and carrots together in China, thus the audience of this imagery in China will be incomprehensible and the translator finds the “秤” and “砣” that the Chinese audience are very familiar with.

Such a domestication strategy not only guarantees the cultural sense of belonging of the Chinese audiences, but also accurately expresses the central ideas of the source language. The relevance theory emphasizes the optimal relevance, that is, the audience can make the least effort to get the best context effect. In the translation of this sentence, “秤” and “砣” not only retain the cultural characteristics of the language, but also reflect the characteristics of Chinese culture allow viewers to understand the meaning of source language subtitles to the greatest extent and obtain the best contextual effects.

#### Example 2

Forrest: Now, it would be I ran to get where I was going, I never thought it would take me anywhere.

我到哪里都是跑着去，从未想到竟然会跑出名堂来。

Forrest is often bullied because of his low IQ. The bullying of other children and the encouragement of Jenny have inspired the potential of Forrest to run. He even runs faster than the car. In this sentence, “it would take me anywhere” is not literally means that running can take Forrest all over the world. From the following part of this movie, it can be known that Forrest has quickly entered the university football team by running. Using “竟然会跑出名堂来” to translate this sentence, the translator succeeds in expressing the implied meaning of this sentence, without losing the original intention of the original text, and ensuring the Chinese audience’s understanding of this sentence.

### Example 3

Jenny: He doesn't know any better.

他不懂事。

Although Forrest is not as smart as ordinary people, he is purely kind, and his love for Jenny is also the most touching part of the film. In the film, Forrest thinks that Jenny is being “bullied” and then fights Jenny’s boyfriend. “He doesn’t know any better.” means “He is not clever, and he knows nothing about us” in the others’ mind, however, the translator has a deep understanding of the fact that Jenny loves Forrest very much. Therefore, for the translation of this sentence, the translator does not use other words to describe the stupidity of Forrest, but summarizes it with “不懂事”, which means someone is childish in English. In China, the phrase “不懂事” is also a normal phrase to describe children, so it is appropriately adopted here.

The translator takes into account the discourse habits of the Chinese audiences and expresses the intention of the source language very well. Moreover, this also conforms to the principle of optimal relevance in relevance theory, that is, the utterance produces enough contextual effects, and the listener only needs to make minimal processing effort for it. Chinese audiences can easily understand the intentions and emotions of the expression of characters in movies.

### Example 4

Forrest: Anyway, I guess you could say me and mama was on our own.

总之，我想你可以说，我和妈妈相依为命。

From the film we can know that Forrest’s father has left him forever, and he lives with his mother. From this context, it is not difficult to see the meaning of this sentence. In this translated sentence, the translator turns “me and mama was on our own” into “相依为命”, and the phrase “相依为命” is commonly used to describe people who stick together and help each other in difficulties in China, there is no denying that any Chinese who understands this phrase will be aware of the implications of the source language. The phrase “was on our own” is a good expression of the deep feelings between Forrest and his mother. Therefore, this translation can create a context for the target audience, so that the target audience can fully understand the implicit communication information.

### Example 5

Forrest: Lieutenant Dan was always getting these funny feelings about a rock or a trail or a road.

对于路上的风吹草动，邓中尉总是草木皆兵。

Lieutenant Dan is also a very important role in the film. It can be concluded from the previous narrative in the movie that Lieutenant Dan is a very cautious man because his ancestors have sacrificed on the battlefield. This is reflected in the sentences that Forrest says, and the translator’s translation of this sentence uses the phrases “草木皆兵” and “风吹草动” to reflect this. These two words not only conform to the Chinese people’s understanding of these two words in their daily life, but also reflect the meaning of the original text.

### 4.3 A case study of ostensive-inferential communication in the subtitle translation

Sperber and Wilson put forward the “ostensive-inferential” mode of verbal communication in relevance theory. They believe that ostensive-inferential communication is two aspects of the communicative process. From the perspective of the speaker, communication is an unambiguous process of signaling that the speaker expresses his intention clearly when communicating; but from the perspective of the hearer, communication is a process of inferencing, in which the speaker’s communicative intention is inferred from the information provided by the speaker through inferencing. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, relevance theory proposes that language communication is a cognitive activity based on certain rules of reasoning. According to the principle of association, any communicative behavior conveys the assumption or expectation of the optimal relevance. The listener always obtains the maximum context effect with minimal cognitive effort, and derives the communicative intention of the speaker.

#### Example 1

Man: Are you telling me you are the owner of Bubba-Gump Shrimp Corporation?

你就是布巴阿甘虾的老板?

Forrest: Yes, sir. We got more money than Davy Crockett.

是，我们比北边城英雄更有钱。

“Davy Crockett” is a cultural word in the United States. It refers to a politician in the United States. The translator regards it as “北边城英雄” here. For this information, the Chinese audiences enable to make reasonable reasoning and judgement that this is a very rich man, and allowing them to understand the original intentions to the greatest extent possible. When talking about the application of relevance theory in subtitle translation, the researchers usually emphasize the connection between subtitles and the cognitive context of the audiences. The subtitles will give them visual information when they watch the movie.

By reading subtitles, they can stimulate the existing information in their minds, which is related to the subtitles presented, and then fully understand the meaning of the original text through reasoning.

#### Example 2

Forrest: And then, just like that, somebody turned off the rain, and the sun came out.

忽然间雨停了，好像有人关掉水龙头，太阳钻了出来。

During Forrest’s participation in the Vietnam War, it rained for a long time. But one day the rain suddenly stopped. Forrest uses this sentence “somebody turned off the rain, and the sun came out” to describe the sun shines again after rain, and it is also a very vivid expression. The translator doesn’t add other modifications, but directly translates the meaning of the original text. This phrase “关掉水龙头” not only largely reveals that Forrest is a naive guy, but through this subtitle, the target audience can understand the meaning of the source language through reasoning that “It stops raining.” The ostensive-inferential principle emphasized by relevance theory is that the translated text can achieve the same level of understanding as the source audience after the simple reasoning of the audience. And in this translation, it is perfectly exemplified.

## Conclusion

As we know, foreign films have become an indispensable part of intercultural communication. Therefore, subtitle translation plays a vital role in it. This paper aims to study the application of relevance theory in the subtitle translation of the film *Forrest Gump*.

This thesis has studied the subtitle translation of *Forrest Gump* from the perspective of relevance theory based on the previous study. In this case study, 15 examples of subtitle translations in the film *Forrest Gump* are exemplified and analyzed in detail on the level of context, ostensive-inferential communication and optimal relevance, to illustrate the guiding significance of relevance theory to subtitle translation. According to the study, the two findings are as follows. In the first place, these three factors in relevance theory are interrelated: a successful communication is the pursuit of the optimal relevance by the two communicators, the ostensive-inferential communication and the realization of optimal relevance should rely on the contextual effect. Therefore, based on relevance theory, the ultimate goal of the example analysis is to determine whether the optimal relevance is achieved. In the second place, it's obvious that the Chinese translated subtitles of *Forrest Gump* is successful, the translated words and phrases are appropriate for the Chinese viewers to comprehend

However, due to the limitation of the resources, it's difficult to collect sufficient useful information. And in addition, the analysis and explanations in this thesis are not accurate, and the concrete supporting ideas are not enough.

Therefore, as a significant work, *Forrest Gump* needs to be studied further; as an important translation theory, the relevance theory need to be explored deeply; and as a communicative method, subtitle need to be researched repeatedly from many other creative perspectives. Under the current conditions of rapid development of globalization, there should be more people in the translation field to study the translation of subtitles, so that the culture of each country can be transmitted to the world through subtitles, making the world a melting pot of culture.

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