

A Study on Chinese Film Subtitle Translation: With *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as an Example

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Corresponding Author Rui Jiao USST(University of Shanghai for Science and Technology)	Abstract: This paper examines the application of process-oriented consciousness versus result-oriented consciousness and possibility-oriented consciousness versus fact-oriented consciousness in Chinese film subtitle translation, using "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" as a case study. It analyzes how these four forms of awareness function in translation practice and their effect on translation quality. By establishing a theoretical framework and examining concrete examples, the study highlights the significance of these conceptual pairs in subtitle translation and suggests relevant translation strategies. The findings indicate that appropriate use of process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness, along with possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness can significantly improve the accuracy and fluency of subtitles, thereby enhancing the viewing experience and deepening the audience's comprehension of the film. Keywords: <i>Process-Oriented Consciousness, Result-Oriented Consciousness, Possibility-Oriented Consciousness, Fact-Oriented Consciousness Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.</i>
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Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization, film, as an important medium of cultural communication, relies heavily on the quality of its translation to influence audience experience and the effectiveness of cross-cultural exchange. The translation of Chinese film subtitles must not only accurately convey the original meaning but also take into account the linguistic habits and cultural background of the target audience. Using the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a case study, this paper aims to explore the roles of process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness as well as possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness in Chinese film subtitle translation. It analyzes the application of these four types of consciousness in translation practice and their impact on translation quality.

In cross-cultural communication and translation studies, the cultural context and ways of thinking profoundly influence the choice of translation strategies. By analyzing the Chinese and English subtitles of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* within the theory of process-oriented consciousness versus result-oriented consciousness and possibility-oriented consciousness versus fact-oriented consciousness, this paper examines the differences in expression between Chinese and English and investigates how these differences affect the selection of translation strategies.

Possibility-Oriented and Fact-Oriented Consciousness

According to the translation theory of possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness proposed by Wang Jianguo in *An Analysis of Translation Practice from a Chinese-English Comparative Perspective*, there are also differences in how Chinese and English express the possibility and fact. Chinese tends to use flexible expressions such as "可能" (may), "会" (will), or "可以" (can) to convey uncertainty or openness, avoiding absolute assertions. In contrast, English often prioritizes factual precision and concrete description.

Definitions of Possibility-Oriented and Fact-Oriented Consciousness

- **Possibility-Oriented Consciousness:** Refers to the speaker's tendency to use vague or uncertain expressions, leaving room for interpretation and avoiding definitive judgments.
- **Fact-Oriented Consciousness:** Refers to the speaker's tendency to use clear and specific language to state facts directly, without ambiguity.

The Manifestation of Possibility and Fact in Translation

In English-to-Chinese translation, Chinese translators often convert factual expressions from English into possibility-oriented expressions, employing flexible wording to reflect the possibility-oriented consciousness of Chinese. Conversely, in Chinese-to-English translation, English translators tend to transform possibility-oriented Chinese expressions into factual statements, using precise language to align with fact-oriented consciousness of English.

The application of possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness is particularly important in film subtitle translation. Subtitle translation must not only accurately convey the original meaning but also consider the linguistic habits and cultural background of the target audience. These concepts help translators navigate complex linguistic and cultural differences by flexibly selecting the most appropriate expressions.

Process-Oriented and Result-Oriented Consciousness

According to the translation theory of "process-oriented consciousness" and "result-oriented consciousness" proposed by Wang Jianguo in *An Analysis of Translation Practice from a Chinese-English Comparative Perspective*, there are significant



differences in how Chinese and English express events. Chinese tends to be “process-oriented,” meaning that when describing an event, it focuses more on the process, while English tends to be “result-oriented,” emphasizing the result of the event. This distinction manifests in translation such that Chinese translations often elaborate on the process, whereas English translations are more inclined to state the result directly.

Definitions of Process-Oriented and Result-Oriented Consciousness

- **Process-Oriented Consciousness:** Refers to the speaker’s focus on the procedure of an event when perceiving it. In expression, the process may be described in detail, and even when the result is eventually expressed, the process is often stated first.
- **Result-Oriented Consciousness:** Refers to the speaker’s focus on the result of an event when perceiving it. In expression, the process may be omitted, and the result is conveyed directly.

The Manifestation of Process and Result in Translation

In English-Chinese translation, Chinese translators often transform result-oriented English sentences into process-oriented ones, providing a detailed description of the event’s progression. Conversely, in Chinese-English translation, English translators tend to compress process-oriented Chinese sentences into result-oriented ones, expressing the result of the event directly.

Process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness ensure that the final translation meets the audience’s expectations and enhances the viewing experience.

In film subtitle translation, the application of process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness is crucial. These concepts help ensure that the subtitle translation ultimately fulfills the audience’s expectations and improves their viewing experience.

Analysis of the Subtitles in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

Through an analysis of the Chinese and English subtitles in the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the differences between Chinese and English become evident in terms of process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness, possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness.

The Possibility-Oriented and Fact-Oriented Consciousness in the Subtitles

In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the Chinese subtitles often employ vague and uncertain expressions, while the English subtitles tend to use clear and specific language. The analysis is based on Wang Jianguo’s translation theory of possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness from *An Analysis of Translation Practice from a Chinese-English Comparative Perspective*:

The following analysis applies Wang Jianguo’s translation theory to specific subtitle examples from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, highlighting how the possibility-oriented and fact-oriented consciousness shape translation strategies between Chinese and English.

Example 1

- **Chinese:** “蔡九，你这臭当差的你不给我活路，我也不让你活。”

- **English:** “That’s what you think, old witch! If you surrender now, you’ll suffer less. But if you resist, I won’t stop until you’re dead.”

Analysis: The Chinese expression “不给我活路” is inherently ambiguous, leaving room for interpretation and emphasizing a sense of potential threat rather than an explicit result. This aligns with the Chinese tendency to use possibility-oriented language, which avoids absolute statements and allows for contextual flexibility.

The English translation, however, converts this ambiguity into a factual and conditional statement. By specifying the consequences of surrender (“you’ll suffer less”) and resistance (“I won’t stop until you’re dead”), the subtitle adheres to the English preference for clarity and factual precision. This shift reflects the translator’s awareness of the target audience’s expectation for directness and explicit information.

Such differences highlight the importance of adapting translational strategies to accommodate linguistic and cultural norms. The translator’s application of possibility-oriented consciousness or fact-oriented consciousness ensures that the subtitles not only convey the original meaning but also resonate naturally with the target audience.

I. English-to-Chinese Translation: Dominance of Fact-Oriented Consciousness, Supplemented by Possibility-Oriented Consciousness

Example 2

- **English:** “I’ll never live as a thief! I owe you nothing.”
- **Chinese:** “我不会跟你去做江洋大盗！对你，我已仁至义尽了。”

Analysis: The English line “thief”, “owe you nothing” is direct and factual (fact-oriented consciousness). The Chinese translation retains the factual meaning by literally translating “thief” into “江洋大盗”(a notorious bandit). The Chinese “仁至义尽”(have done everything I could morally do) introduces a layer of subjective evaluation and emotional ambiguity (possibility-oriented consciousness), softening the bluntness of the original while aligning with Chinese expressive habits that imply rather than explicitly state.

Example 3

- **English:** “It’s the Giang Hu fighter lifestyle... kill or be killed. Exciting, isn’t it?”
- **Chinese:** “这就是江湖，恩恩怨怨、你死我活，很吓人，也很刺激是吧？”

Analysis: The English phrase “kill or be killed” is translated literally as “你死我活” (fact-oriented consciousness). However, the Chinese version expands additional vague terms like “恩恩怨怨”(complex grudges and favors) and “很吓人” (very frightening), enhancing emotional resonance and contextual richness (possibility-oriented consciousness) and adapting to the Chinese audiences’ preference for evocative and morally nuanced language.

II. Chinese-to-English Translation: Strengthening Fact and Weakening Ambiguity

Example 4

- Chinese: “这把剑有四百年的来历。”
- English: “It’s 400 years old.”

Analysis: The Chinese phrase “四百年的来历” implies historical depth and cultural significance (possibility-oriented consciousness). The English translates into a factual statement (“400 years old”), stripping away the associative nuances to prioritize clarity and conciseness (fact-oriented consciousness), which aligns with English preferences for directness.

Example 5

- Chinese: “青冥剑！把它送给贝勒爷？”
- English: “The Green Destiny sword? You’re giving it to Sir Te?”

Analysis: “青冥剑” is translated literally as “Green Destiny sword” (fact-oriented consciousness), preserving the cultural image. “贝勒爷” (a Qing dynasty title) is rendered as “Sir Te,” combining the phonetic translation “Te” with a generalized title “Sir”. This approach balances cultural specificity with accessibility for English viewers, reflecting fact-oriented consciousness while simplifying culturally complex terms.

III. Additional Examples Highlighting Consciousness Shifts

Example 6: English-to-Chinese (Fact-Oriented Consciousness → Possibility-Oriented Consciousness)

- English: “Writers wouldn’t sell many books if they told how it really is.”
- Chinese: “写书的不那么写，书就没法子卖了。”

Analysis: The English phrase “how it really is” is factual (fact-oriented consciousness). The Chinese translation generalizes to “不那么写” (not writing in that way), omitting specific details. “没法子卖了” (cannot be sold) uses vague wordings (possibility-oriented consciousness) to imply “poor sales,” aligning with Chinese indirectness.

Example 7: Chinese-to-English (Concretizing Vague Expressions)

- Chinese: “说多了你也不懂。”
- English: “You’re too young to understand.”

Analysis: The Chinese line euphemistically suggests the heroine’s inability to comprehend (possibility-oriented consciousness). The English subtitle “too young to understand” specifies the reason as youthful (fact-oriented consciousness), making the statement more explicit and culturally appropriate for English audiences.

Example 8: English-to-Chinese (Fuzzy Handling of Cultural Imagery)

- English: “Giang Hu underworld”
- Chinese: “江湖”

Analysis: The term “Giang Hu”, the phonetic translation of “江湖”, is explained in English as “underworld” to provide context. However, the Chinese translation simply uses “江湖”, a culturally loaded term that inherently encompasses notions of martial society, moral complexity, and human drama (possibility-oriented consciousness). No additional explanation is needed for Chinese viewers, demonstrating how fact-oriented consciousness

in English requires amplification for clarity, while Chinese relies on cultural implicitness.

Summary

Tendency in Subtitle Translation: Mainly fact-oriented consciousness, ensuring efficiency and accuracy of information transfer (e.g., time and space constraints).

Flexible Supplement of Possibility-Oriented Consciousness: In scenes of emotional rendering and cultural association, by adding vague vocabulary such as “恩怨怨” “仁至义尽” or adjusting tone, balance Chinese expression habits.

Handling Cultural Differences: For proper nouns such as “江湖” or “青冥剑”, use literal translation or transliteration, combined with English factual expression to reduce ambiguity.

English to Chinese Translation: While conveying facts, often use vague vocabulary (e.g., “恩怨” “江湖” or supplement emotional expression (e.g., “仁至义尽”) to enhance context rendering and fit Chinese implicitness.

Chinese to English Translation: Need to convert vague Chinese expressions (e.g., “说多了” “母的”) into clear facts (e.g., “too young” “female”), and simplify cultural metaphors to ensure clear understanding for English audiences.

Culture-Specific Items: Use transliteration (e.g., “Giang Hu” → “江湖”) or literal translation plus annotation (e.g., “青冥剑” → “Green Destiny sword”) to balance cultural retention and readability.

These cases reflect the dynamic balance between possibility-oriented consciousness and fact-oriented consciousness in translation, requiring both respect for original information and flexible adaptation to target language expression habits. This aligns with Professor Wang Jianguo’s theoretical framework that “Chinese tends to be implicit and reserved, while English prioritizes being explicit and direct.” and also reflects the practical need for flexible adjustment based on context in actual translation.

The Process-Oriented and Result-Oriented Consciousness in the Subtitles

In the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the Chinese subtitles often elaborate on the process of events, while the English subtitles tend to focus more directly on the result. Based on Wang Jianguo’s theory of process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness from *A Comparative Analysis of Translation Practice Between Chinese and English*, and through a comparative analysis of the subtitles in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the following conclusions can be drawn:

I. Chinese Emphasizes Process, English Emphasizes Result**Example 9**

- English: “You’re already a thief.” (Result-oriented Consciousness, directly defining the identity)
- Chinese: “你已经是人人捉拿的江洋大盗了！” (Add the social dynamic of “人人捉拿” to emphasize the process logic)

Analysis: The Chinese version includes additional information “人人捉拿” to describe the consequences of the event’s development, aligning with the process-oriented consciousness of Chinese.

II. Chinese Expands the Process, English Compresses It into a Result

Example 10

- English: “That was just for fun. How can I leave?” (Result-oriented consciousness, using “for fun” to summarize the motivation)
- Chinese: “我只是想玩玩儿我干嘛走，我走哪儿去？” (Reinforces the psychological process through the repetition of “我走哪儿去”)

Analysis: The Chinese version elaborates on psychological activity through rhetorical questions and modal particles (e.g., “嘛”, “去”), while the English version expresses the result concisely.

III. Chinese Implies the Result, English Explicitly States It

Example 11

- English: “It’s time for me to leave it behind.” (Clearly states the result: “leave”)
- Chinese: “该是离开这些恩怨的时候了” (Uses “恩怨”(grudge or resentment) to imply the event’s background, making the process more complex)

Analysis: The Chinese version requires contextual understanding to grasp the specific meaning of “离开”, while the English version directly states the result.

Example 12

- English: “They’ll settle this at midnight on Yellow Hill.” (Result-oriented consciousness, directly stating the resolution)
- Chinese: “今晚酉时黄土岗上，一决生死！” (Uses the four-character idiom “一决生死” to intensify the conflict process)

Analysis: The Chinese version employs a four-character idiom “一决生死” to dramatize the process, while the English version states the result concisely.

IV. Some Translations May Deviate from the Theory Due to Cultural Differences or Contextual Needs

Example 13

- English: “I’ve read all about people like you. Roaming wild, beating up anyone who gets in your way!” (Result-oriented consciousness, directly describing the behavior)
- Chinese: “可我看书上说的都是挺有意思的，到处都能去，遇上不服气的就打。” (Expands the conditional process with “遇上不服气的”)

Analysis: While the English version focuses on the result, the Chinese version further elaborates on the process by adding conditions (“遇上不服气的”(someone who remains unconvinced)), which is consistent with Chinese characteristics.

Example 14

- English: “Shut up!”
- Chinese: “你给我闭嘴！”

Analysis: The English version is a direct command, goal-oriented and focused on the result. The Chinese version adds “你给我”(I requires you) to emphasize the direction of the action,

reflecting the process-oriented consciousness of Chinese and enhancing emotional intensity.

Summary

Process-Oriented Consciousness (Chinese): Enhances the dynamics of event development and contextual rendering by adding action details (e.g., “跟你去做”, “恩怨”) and cultural imagery (e.g., “江湖” “青冥剑”).

Result-Oriented Consciousness (English): Focuses on concise statements (e.g., “400 years old” “too young”) and direct translations of cultural symbols (e.g., “Giang Hu”), prioritizing core information and downplaying the process.

Dynamic Balance: Chinese translation tends to “expand the process to support the result,” while English “compresses the process to highlight the result” aligning with the theory that “Chinese emphasizes process while English emphasizes result.”

These strategies preserve the core meaning of the original text while adapting to the cultural conventions of the target language, demonstrating a flexible balance between “process” and “result” in translation.

The subtitle translation in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* generally follows the pattern of “Chinese emphasizes process while English emphasizes result.” Chinese tends to convey information through detailed elaboration, emotional rendering, and process description, while English focuses more on directly expressing the result or core action of events. This difference reflects the linguistic characteristics of process-oriented consciousness and result-oriented consciousness, as well as the deeper narrative logic and cultural expression differences between the two languages.

Translation Methods and Style

In the subtitles of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, translators must flexibly employ a variety of translation methods to ensure accuracy and fluency. Below are some commonly used approaches:

Literal Translation and Free Translation

Literal translation and free translation are two frequently used strategies. Literal translation emphasizes faithfulness to the source text, while free translation prioritizes conveying the original meaning. In the subtitles of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, translators adapt these strategies according to specific contexts.

For instance, literal translation can be applied to martial arts terminology to preserve the cultural distinctiveness of the original. In translating emotionally charged dialogue, free translation may be used to ensure the target audience grasps the underlying emotional nuances.

Cultural Annotation

Cultural annotation is an effective way to help target audiences understand culture-specific terms. In the subtitles of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, translators can incorporate annotations to explain words with profound cultural connotations. For example, when translating “江湖”, a note can be added to clarify its meaning within Chinese culture. This approach not only conveys the original meaning but also aids the target audience in comprehending its cultural context.

Adaptation of Linguistic Style

Different languages possess distinct expressive conventions and styles. In the subtitles of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, translators must adapt the linguistic style according to the norms of the target language to ensure fluency and naturalness. During action scenes, a concise and dynamic style can be adopted to convey tension and rhythm. For emotional dialogues, a more nuanced and refined style may be employed to express the depth and complexity of feelings.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of the English subtitles in the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, distinct differences between Chinese and English can be observed in terms of process-oriented consciousness versus result-oriented consciousness and possibility-oriented consciousness versus fact-oriented consciousness." These differences directly influence the choice of translation strategies.

In English-to-Chinese translation, translators should strive to convert result-oriented English sentences into process-oriented Chinese ones, elaborating on the progression of events to align with the Chinese preference for process-oriented consciousness. In Chinese-to-English translation, translators should compress process-oriented Chinese sentences into result-oriented English expressions, directly stating the result to match the English preference for " result-oriented consciousness."

Similarly, in English-to-Chinese translation, factual expressions in English should often be transformed into possibility-oriented expressions in Chinese, using more ambiguous or tentative wording to reflect the possibility-oriented consciousness of Chinese. In Chinese-to-English translation, possibility-oriented expressions in Chinese should be rendered as factual statements in English, employing clear and definite language to conform to the fact-oriented consciousness of English.

Using *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as a case study, this paper has explored the application of process-oriented consciousness versus result-oriented consciousness and possibility-

oriented consciousness versus fact-oriented consciousness in Chinese film subtitling. It has analyzed how these four orientations function in translation practice and their impact on translation quality. By constructing a theoretical framework and examining specific examples, this study highlights the significance of these orientations in film subtitling and proposes corresponding translation strategies and methods. The appropriate application of these concepts can enhance the accuracy and fluency of subtitles, improve the audience's viewing experience, and facilitate a deeper understanding of the film's underlying themes.

In summary, subtitle translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but also a cultural mediation. Translators must fully comprehend the cultural backgrounds and cognitive styles of both source and target languages, select suitable translation methods, and produce appropriate and coherent translations to achieve effective communication in cross-cultural exchanges.

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