

# A Study of Documentary Subtitle Translation in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* from the Perspective of Intersemiotic Complementarity

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## Abstract

This study conducts a multimodal discourse analysis of subtitle translation in a political documentary under the intersemiotic complementarity framework. As a representative of China's political documentaries, *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* tells the stories of whole-process people's democracy, freedom and human rights. Although it contains rich multimodal resources, scholarly attention usually focuses on translation techniques and international communication on a verbal level. Hence, this study probes into the interaction between the verbal and non-verbal modes in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, summarizes the subtitle translation techniques under the above interaction, and puts forward four suggestions on subtitle translation. Intersemiotic complementarity theory is drawn upon as the analytical framework. A total of 51 cases are collected, and 12 typical cases are analyzed in detail with a focus on the visual and verbal modes and their interactions. It is found that 1) intersemiotic interaction is embodied in ideational, interpersonal and compositional aspects; 2) four types of translation techniques have been observed: addition, omission, specification and substitution; 3) in the process of subtitle translation, translators should add important information missing in the source text; omit secondary information to highlight key information; clarify meaning and attitude to target viewers; and use expressions that target viewers are accustomed to. It is hoped that this research not only deepens people's understanding of the interaction between verbal and non-verbal modes in the translation of audiovisual texts, but also provides some reference for future documentary translation studies and further contributes to the construction of China's good international image.

**Keywords:** multimodal discourse analysis, intersemiotic complementarity, documentary *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, subtitle translation

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## 1. Introduction

Owing to the rapid development of streaming media and the digitalization of various kinds of information, multimodal discourse analysis (hereinafter referred to as MDA), exploring how various modalities interact synergistically to produce meaning, has been a hot issue in recent years. Documentaries are special kinds of audiovisual products (Currie 1999), which combine text, image, sound and other modes to represent reality. Subtitling is a special type of language transfer: a written, condensed translation of a predominantly spoken original (Nedergaard 1993). The famous Danish translator Gottlieb (1994) pointed out that given the complexity of subtitling, translators are supposed to have the ears of musicians, the sensitivity of writers, the keen vision of editors and the aesthetic consciousness of designers. Additionally, the political documentary, usually with high information density and fast speech rate in the limited time and space, poses more problems for subtitle translation. To be specific, the majority of studies tended to research the static image or subtitle by using MDA, and most Chinese researchers adopted the relatively fixed MDA framework proposed by Zhang (2009) to discuss subtitle translation from four levels, including culture, context, content and expression. Apart from subtle differences in research objects, their conclusions are almost the same. Notably, Royce (2007) put forward the theoretical framework of intersemiotic complementarity, which provides a systematic analysis method of multimodal discourse on how different modes cooperate with each other to express ideational, interpersonal and compositional meanings. Nevertheless, few studies make use of the intersemiotic complementarity framework to analyze the documentary subtitle translation. As a result, under the guidance of the intersemiotic complementarity theory, this study probes into the interaction between verbal and non-verbal modes for constructing meaning in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, and investigates the impact of intersemiotic

complementarity on translation.

The research significance is viewed from two perspectives. Theoretically, this study aims to test the feasibility and validity of applying intersemiotic complementarity as the analytical framework of subtitle translation in political documentaries, and to prove that multimodal meaning construction encompasses the complex interaction of various semiotic resources, such as written and spoken words, and images. On a practical level, this study is expected to provide some reference and guidance for subtitle translation in political documentaries by summarizing the translation techniques adopted in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, and by proposing some suggestions on subtitle translation.

The study takes as the research object the subtitle translation in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, and capitalizes on the case analysis method and the inductive approach. This documentary was released by the Xinhua News Agency in December 2021 and lasts for approximately one hour. In this documentary, three U.S. experts join Xinhua correspondent Miao Xiaojuan on a discovery tour across the nation to learn what the Chinese people have to say about whole-process people's democracy, freedom and human rights. Obviously, *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* is an important publicity material to deal with stigmatization and better understand the frequently misrepresented China. This is the foremost reason why this documentary is selected as the research object. On top of that, the case analysis method takes multiple modes of *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* into account with a focus on the visual and verbal modes and their interactions. A total of 51 cases are selected to build a small corpus, and 12 typical cases are analyzed in detail to illustrate translation techniques under the framework of intersemiotic complementarity. Besides, the inductive approach is applied to summarize the four translation techniques and the suggestions on documentary translation via investigating subtitle extracted from *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*. Three key problems to be solved are as follows. 1) What aspects reflect the interaction among different modes? 2) What translation techniques are adopted in the above interactive process? 3) What suggestions can the intersemiotic complementarity theory provide for subtitle translation?

## 2. Literature Review

The studies on documentary subtitle translation have yielded plentiful achievements. This part will review the studies on documentary subtitle translation both at home and abroad, and point out major findings and shortcomings.

### 2.1 Foreign Studies on Documentary Subtitle Translation

In terms of research perspective, foreign scholars tend to apply linguistic and translation theories to documentary subtitle translation, such as systemic functional grammar, poly-system theory and adaptation theory. Under the guidance of systemic functional linguistics, Mubenga (2010) first described the advantages of using this theory, discussed some challenges in documentary translation, and summarized principles in interlingual subtitling. Then, he delved into translation shifts and proposed some norms in regard to normative pronouncements. From the perspective of poly-system theory, Karamitroglou (2000) conducted a detailed case analysis on the choice between subtitling and dubbing children's programs in his doctoral dissertation. Based on the adaptation theory, Canalès (2020) examined how the emergence of transmedia narratives reveals the fact that adaptation and translation must step into the study of the contemporary transmedia landscape. The results showed that adaptation is reduced to a mere media transfer, and translation is mostly referred to as an interlinguistic operation in recent academic conversations around transmedia and participatory culture.

In terms of research content, previous studies lay stress on problems encountered by translators in subtitle translation and concrete translation techniques in different types of documentaries. As for the problems in subtitle translation, Díaz and Remael (2007) probed into the influence of local translation guidelines and language policies on translation activities by conducting a contrastive analysis of one PBS documentary and two BBC documentaries. They drew a conclusion that translators should simplify the complexity of the source text (hereinafter referred to as ST) and cater to local viewers' tastes. Lera (2017) elaborated on translators' dilemmas and potential translation problems in medical documentaries and concluded that professional documentary translation is extremely complex therefore translators should attempt to establish a specialized analytical framework. Speaking of the translation techniques in different kinds of documentaries, Budiana, Sutopo and Rukmini (2017) investigated the translation techniques in the Indonesian documentary *Dhaup Ageng*. The results stated that literal translation is the most dominant technique and other translation techniques, such as compression, borrowing, transposition, linguistic amplification and compensation, are used properly according to

the context. Utami and Satyaningrum (2022), taking as the research object the documentary about environmental protection *Our Planet*, probed into its translation techniques. The findings demonstrated that 14 translation techniques of Molina and Albir's theory can account for 50.6 percent of techniques and the description and modulation techniques are the least utilized.

### 2.2 Domestic Studies on Documentary Subtitle Translation

In regard to the research perspective, Chinese scholars take full advantage of eco-translatology theory, skopos theory and functional equivalence theory. First of all, some studies treat eco-translatology as the theoretical foundation (Li 2018; Zhang & Chen 2018; Zhou & Zhang 2019; Wan & Wen 2021). For instance, Zhou and Zhang (2019) took the documentary *Wild China* as the research object, verified the significance of eco-translatology to documentary subtitle translation and supplemented a research perspective of documentary subtitle translation. Besides, some scholars capitalize on the skopos theory (Chen 2016; Luo & Wang 2017; Ji 2021; Wang 2022). Based on the skopos theory, Chen (2016) analyzed the receivers' expectations, educational background, and translation commissioner's requirements, and researched the language characteristics and translation techniques in the subtitle translation of the CCTV documentary *The Japanese Repatriation from the Huludao*. What is more, some researchers draw on Nida's functional equivalence theory (Pan 2018; Li & Mo 2020; Li & Yang 2021). For instance, Li and Yang (2021) explored the equivalence of lexical level, syntactical level, contextual level and textual level respectively via the subtitle translation of the documentary *China's Fight against Covid-19*. The key findings were that the target text (hereinafter referred to as TT) adopted literal and liberal translation to deal with the culture-loaded words and four-character idioms on a lexical level. On the syntactic level, conversion of voice, conjunction and present particle were used to make the source language and translated subtitle more coherent and authentic. On the contextual and textual level, the TT distinguished the formal and informal languages based on the sentence length and the complexity of the structure.

In regard to research content, most Chinese scholars focus on MDA, translators' behavior, and translation difficulties and techniques in different documentary genres. First off, lots of researchers utilize the MDA framework proposed by Professor Zhang Delu. From four aspects of culture, context, content and expression, Fu (2022), taking the documentary *Insects Awakening* as the research object, explored how to make the most use of verbal, visual and other modes to promote international communication. Li, Zhang and Li (2022) investigated the translation techniques in the documentary *Amazing China* from the above four aspects, and explored how to establish the overall textual meaning through coordination among multiple modes. In addition, there are some studies investigating the influence of translators' behavior on translation activities. Qing (2014) stated that the translator's behavior determines the result of the translation and there are many factors that influence the translator's behavior, especially specific connotations and extensions, social and cultural environment, and functions and purposes of documentary subtitle translation. Wang (2018) analyzed the translator's creative treason in the documentary *Amazing China*. Furthermore, some studies investigate difficulties and techniques in natural and historical documentaries. Taking the documentary *The Art Of DunHuang* as an example, Dou (2014) elaborated on the translation problems in the historical documentary, namely, the translation of historical and cultural content and the limitation of subtitle. Gu (2019) also explored the translation difficulties in the natural documentary and researched how to improve its quality by analyzing the subtitle translation of the natural documentary *Aerial China*.

### 2.3 Limitations on Previous Studies

As formulated above, there are still some research gaps. In terms of research perspective, researchers at home and abroad mainly investigate documentary subtitle translation according to translation theory and linguistic theory, but few scholars conduct research from the perspective of intersemiotic complementarity. In terms of research content, first, most Chinese researchers analyze subtitle translation from the four aspects of culture, context, content and expression, and the four dimensions are somewhat limited, which is not conducive to exploring the role of subtitle translation in other aspects. Second, few scholars summarize the translation difficulties and techniques in political documentaries. Third, although many studies have explored the translation difficulties and factors affecting the translator's behavior, few studies propose corresponding suggestions for subtitle translation to solve these problems. Hence, based on the intersemiotic complementarity theory, this study takes as the research object the political documentary *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, explores intersemiotic complementarity in ideational, interpersonal and compositional terms, summarizes the translation techniques,

and puts forward some suggestions on subtitle translation.

### 3. Intersemiotic Complementarity Theory

Intersemiotic complementarity is derived from the systemic functional linguistic view of language as “social semiotic” (Halliday 1978). Halliday (1985) identifies three types of meaning that are reflected in human language as a whole, forming the basis of the semantic organization of all natural languages. These are metafunctions, components operating simultaneously in the semantics of every language. Definitions of metafunctions need to be more specific. The ideational metafunction is the resource for the representation of experience: our experience of the world that lies about us and also inside us, the world of our imagination. Its meaning is in the sense of content. The interpersonal metafunction is the resource for meaning as a form of action: the speaker doing something to the listener by means of language. The textual metafunction is the resource for maintaining relevance to the context: both the preceding (and following) text, and context of situation (Halliday 1985).

According to Halliday’s three metafunctions, Royce first proposes intersemiotic complementarity based on the particularity of multimodal texts. Intersemiotic complementarity means that the visual and verbal modes semantically complement each other to produce a single textual phenomenon in a relationship (Royce 1998). Subsequently, Royce (2007) argues that intersemiotic complementarity can be achieved when one or more of the following situations occur in multimodal texts. Specifically, when the ideational meanings in both modes are related lexico-semantically through intersemiotic sense relations of repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation by means of participants, processes, circumstances and attributes, which can be conflated into the visual message elements; when the interpersonal meanings in both modes are related through intersemiotic reinforcement of mood, intersemiotic attitudinal congruence and attitudinal dissonance relations by virtue of address, involvement, power and social distance; when the textual meanings are integrated by the compositional relations of information value, salience, visual framing, visual synonymy, and reading paths. To summarize, the analytical framework of this study is exhibited in Figure 1.

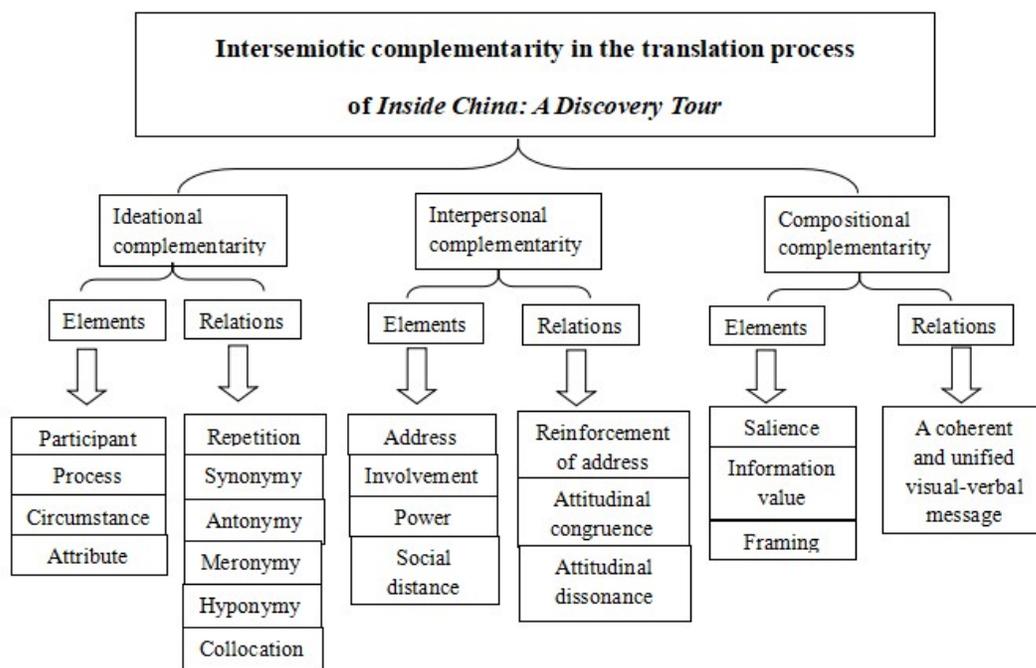


Figure 1 A Simplified Analytical Framework of this Study

### 4. Analysis of Subtitle Translation Techniques in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* from the Perspective of Intersemiotic Complementarity

Based on intersemiotic complementarity, the study retrieves 51 cases from *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, and

concludes that translators primarily adopt four translation techniques: addition, omission, specification and substitution. The following offers three typical cases of each translation technique to demonstrate in detail the complementary relation between the visual and verbal modes.

#### 4.1 Addition

According to Xiong (2014), addition, a traditional translation technique, refers to adding certain words, sentences or paragraphs to the TT concerning the needs of the lexical, syntactic, semantic, rhetorical or stylistic aspects of the TT, so as to better convey the content of the ST, or to effectively achieve a specific translation purpose. In subtitle translation, addition in a multimodal environment means adding either verbal or non-verbal means in the TT (Qian & Feng 2020). Nevertheless, addition does not mean adding randomly. Instead, clues can be found in semiotic modes, which will be demonstrated in the following examples.

#### Example 1:



Picture 1



Picture 2

The use of addition in example 1 can be explicated by ideational intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 41:48 to 41:49, manifests that a Tibetan woman capitalizes on a loom to weave cloth. The term “bangdian(邦典)” in the ST is full of Tibetan cultural characteristics and refers to the ornaments of clothes worn by Tibetan women around their waists. If the translator simply treats it as the Chinese phonetic alphabet, namely, bangdian, it is not helpful for viewers who are not familiar with Chinese culture to understand the real meaning of Bangdian. In light of ideational intersemiotic complementarity between the visual and verbal modes, the silk

thread of the two pictures is the constituent used in the production of bangdian, and the relation between the silk thread and bangdian is meronymy. Hence, the translator adds the annotation “Tibetan aprons” after the Chinese phonetic alphabet to indicate the meaning of bangdian explicitly. Meanwhile, it is easier for target viewers to understand the attributes of bundian via the above pictures.

### Example 2:



Picture 3



Picture 4

The use of addition in example 2 can be elucidated by interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 01:46 to 01:48, displays that a correspondent is asking two boys questions. If the translator just focuses on the ST, the subject “he” cannot be accurately added. Besides, it is easy to misinterpret this sentence as the meaning, that is, “can’t you hear me?” In this way, viewers mistakenly think that the correspondent is asking the right boy about his hearing. In fact, picture 3 reveals that the correspondent asks the name of the left boy but does not get his response, so in picture 4, the correspondent confirms the hearing of the left boy with the right boy. Additionally, viewers tend to coincide with the correspondent’s perspective in this scene. She is taller than the two boys and needs to lean down to hear their voices clearly, so the power relation between viewers and the two boys forms a low angle, therefore viewers are more likely to feel sympathy for the suffering of the left boy. In view of interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity between the visual and verbal modes, the translator adds the subject “he” in picture 4. The subject addition not only eliminates the attitudinal dissonance between the visual and verbal modes in interpersonal term, but also makes the referent clearer and avoids ambiguity.

### Example 3:



Picture 5



Picture 6

The use of addition in example 3 can be explained by compositional intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 00:36 to 00:37, exhibits two children. The ST only mentions “such children(这样的孩子)” and does not specify their characteristics, so a literal translation will puzzle target viewers. According to the compositional intersemiotic complementary between the visual and verbal modes, children in the center of two pictures occupy most of the space, so they are in the foreground. The child in picture 5 is crying. According to common sense, in most cases, children cry to convey information about physical discomfort to their parents, which suggests that the child has a physical defect and lays the foundation for adding the word “disabled”. The child in picture 6 looks out of the window thoughtfully, with a sharp contrast between the black background and the bright light passing through the window. He seems to be swallowed up by darkness, which is deemed as a metaphor for disability, but the support of the Chinese government and parents resemble the light outside the window, inspiring him to be full of confidence for the future. Since the visual and verbal modes together produce unified and coherent information, the translator adds “disabled” given the information provided by the visual mode, so as to help viewers understand the characteristics of such children.

#### 4.2 Omission

In the same vein, Xiong (2014) deems omission as deleting certain words, sentences, or paragraphs according to the lexical, syntactic, semantic and rhetorical needs of the TT, so as to express original ideas and content more concisely, or to better achieve specific translation purposes. The omission technique used in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* can be exhibited in the following examples.

**Example 4:**



**Picture 7**



**Picture 8**

The use of omission in example 4 can be expounded by ideational intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 39:54 to 39:55, indicates that an old man is showing his big belly to the correspondent and foreign experts. Based on the prior content of the documentary, the old man lost 22 kg after suffering from Covid-19. However, thanks to the care of the medical staff, he not only puts on weight, but also becomes very healthy. The two sentences in the ST both describe the characteristics of the old man's big belly. It will be verbose if the two sentences are translated separately. It is noteworthy that the big belly shown both in the visual and verbal modes constitutes a repetition relation. Therefore, the translator adopts omission, using the word "potbellied" instead of two sentences, reducing the reading burden of viewers in the limited time and space.

**Example 5:**



**Picture 9**



**Picture 10**

The use of omission in example 5 can be explained by interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 12:43 to 12:45, displays that representatives of enterprises and workers are negotiating wages under the witness of local government staff and finally both sides are satisfied with the government's suggestion. Viewers usually observe this negotiation from a neutral perspective, that is, the government's perspective. Obviously, the power relation among viewers, government, enterprises and workers is encoded in the eye-level angle, fully proving that China is committed to solving problems for people through democratic consultation. The ST consists of two sentences. If they are translated separately, the culture-loaded word "lao niang jiu(老娘舅)" definitely increases the understanding burden of target viewers. Moreover, if the ST is translated literally, target viewers may mistakenly believe that China forces people to obey the country's commands, which causes attitudinal dissonance between the visual and verbal modes. As a result, the translator omits the secondary information "the leader of enterprises(企业主)" and "lao niang jiu", and translates them into "boss". The smiles of the two sides shown in pictures 9 and 10 help viewers realize that China is a boss who cares for people and wins their hearts, eliminating the attitudinal dissonance between the visual and verbal modes.

**Example 6:**



**Picture 11**

The use of omission in example 6 can be elucidated by compositional intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 38:01 to 38:03, shows that two medical staff wearing protective clothing are discussing the patient's condition. In regard to information value, the left is given information, while the right is unknown information, so their locations indicate that Chinese medical staff try their best to save patients even if the patient's life or death is uncertain. As for the contrast in color value, the environment around the patient is bright, whereas the light of the medical staff is relatively dusky. Furthermore, the patient and treatment equipment occupy most of the space in picture 11. The above compositional characteristics adequately illustrate that the patient lies in the foreground of visual mode. Thus, the translator omits the secondary information, such as “I think(我觉得)” and “we(我们)”, and puts “life” as the subject at the beginning of the sentence, which highlights the priority of lives in China, and realizes the coherence and unity between visual and verbal modes.

**4.3 Specification**

Specification refers to concretizing and clarifying the words with too abstract and vague meanings in the ST (Tian & Yang 2007 ). In *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*, verbal and visual elements are combined to convey readable and connected information to viewers. Notably, in some cases, it is difficult to recognize the connection beyond the text. In the following three examples, the specification technique is used to make the implied meaning clear.

**Example 7:**



**Picture 12**

The use of specification in example 7 can be explicated by ideational intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 18:30 to 18:32, manifests that local and foreign residents are proposing amendments to a draft law. The ST draws on “collision(碰撞)” as a metaphor for “communication between different ideas”, forming a repetition relation with the visual mode. Hence, the translator specifies the meaning of “collision” and translates it as the sentence, namely, “different ideas light sparks”, thereby helping target viewers understand its true meaning. The ideational intersemiotic complementarity between the visual and verbal modes not only vividly shows that China legislates through democratic consultation, but also reflects that China ensures people run the country.

**Example 8:**



**Picture 13**



**Picture 14**

The use of specification in example 8 can be expounded by interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 0:31 to 0:33, demonstrates that the farmer happily talks about the changes in his life. The two pictures give him a medium shot and a close-up respectively, which narrows the social distance between viewers and him, thus making it easier for viewers to believe what he says. Apart from making the TT more clear, specification also involves clarifying the implied information that can be inferred from other semiotic resources. According to the smile shown in picture 13, viewers realize that the loan helps him solve the financial problem and significantly improves his life quality. In order to achieve the attitudinal congruence between the visual and verbal modes, the translator specifies the meaning of “step by step (一步一步)” in the ST and explicitly conveys to target viewers the fact that some Chinese policies have made people’s lives better and better.

### Example 9:



Picture 15

The use of specification in example 9 can be interpreted by compositional intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 30:39 to 30:41, displays the appearance of “the genocidal death camps” in Xinjiang called by some Western media. The buildings are relatively large, so they are in the foreground of picture 15, and the trees and the surrounding environment are in the background. In the light of contrast in color value, the objects are depicted with warm colors such as yellow and green. Besides, the sun shines on the buildings and flowers, seeming that viewers feel warm as well. Given the compositional intersemiotic complementarity between the visual and verbal modes, the translator specifies the abstract and vague words of the ST, that is, translating camps(集中营) into “genocidal death camps”. With the harmonious situation shown in picture 15, viewers can easily judge that China’s genocide in Xinjiang is deliberate stigmatization. The compositional intersemiotic complementarity contributes to countering the stigmatization and showing the real China to the world.

#### 4.4 Substitution

Zhang and Sun (2018) define substitution as a translation technique of replacing an unfamiliar reference with a culturally familiar reference that has an equivalent function. Some expressions are fuzzy in *Inside China: A Discovery Tour*. In the circumstances, combined with visual modes, the translator should make the most use of substitution to eliminate understanding barriers, as displayed in the following three examples.

### Example 10:



Picture 16

The use of substitution in example 10 can be explained by ideational intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 12:35 to 12:36, exhibits that government officials act as peacemakers and actively solve the problems between enterprises and workers. In the past, people referred to those who have prestige and fairness as “lao niang jiu(老娘舅)”, and now this word has gradually evolved into the meaning of mediator. Since target viewers are not familiar with its meaning, a literal translation will confuse target viewers. Given that government officials play the role of mediator in the visual mode, there is an ideational intersemiotic complementarity between the visual and verbal modes. Hence, the translator adopts synonymy substitution, replacing “lao niang jiu” with “peacemaker” of picture 16 or “boss” of pictures 9 and 10, reflecting the mediation role played by the government and presenting China’s image of democratic decision-making and positive actions.

**Example 11:**



**Picture 17**



**Picture 18**

The use of substitution in example 11 can be explicated by interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity. The scene, appearing from 12:24 to 12:26, illustrates that government officials attempt to interrupt the heated debate between enterprises and workers on the issue of wages. At this time, the eyes of both sides focus on government officials. “zhe yang ba(这样吧)” in the ST is a common Chinese mitigation, and “tell you what” is often used in English to lead to a new idea or solution. If this statement expression “tell you what” is used in picture 17, target viewers might assume that China forces enterprises and workers to accept its plan, causing significant attitudinal dissonance between visual and verbal modes. Consequently, the translator substitutes the interrogative sentence “you know what?” for the statement expression, which demonstrates that China solves

problems through democratic consultation rather than authoritatively asking people to obey the country's instructions, and eliminates attitudinal dissonance between different modes. Moreover, this substitution not only attracts viewers' attention and conveys implicit information about important things to be said, but also conforms to the language expression and thinking mode of Westerners.

**Example 12:**



**Picture 19**



**Picture 20**

The use of substitution in example 12 can be explained by compositional intersemiotic complementarity. The above two pictures, appearing from 01:39 to 01:41, first display the travel scene of people of all ethnic groups in an overhead shot, and then give a close-up shot of a Uyghur woman, who tells the China's care and love for people of all ethnic groups. In terms of information value, the above things are abstract and ideal, which corresponds to the vast and boundless sky in picture 19, while the below things are concrete and real, which indicates that China treats people of all ethnic groups equally and really guarantees their lives. In regard to salience, this lady in a bright Uyghur costume occupies more than half of picture 20, so she is in the foreground. As a representative of ethnic minorities, she has the floor about Chinese policies for helping ethnic minorities. In China, "xin tou rou(心头肉)" has rich emotional significance, manifesting that someone or something has a very important position in someone's mind. Owing to the unified meaning produced by the visual and verbal modes, the translator draws on the passive voice "is dearly loved", which proves that 56 ethnic groups are affectionately embraced and protected by the motherland, avoiding the disharmony between different modes caused by literal translation.

## **5. Suggestions for Documentary Subtitle Translation from the Perspective of Intersemiotic Complementarity**

This part will provide some suggestions for documentary subtitle translation based on the intersemiotic complementarity theory.

### *5.1 Add Important Information Missing in the ST*

Even though the subtitle is constrained by time and space, the TT should contain the key information for an accurate understanding of ST. In a short time, the subtitle not only shows the content of the documentary, but also leaves enough time for viewers to read, so subtitle translation is bound to be concise and clear. Nevertheless, when one of the following three situations occurs, the translator needs to add important information missing in the ST. First, the translator wants to emphasize certain key information. Second, the translator seeks to express the speaker's strong feelings or attitudes. Third, the ST cannot provide enough information for target viewers, which influences their understanding.

Taking interpersonal intersemiotic complementarity as an example, if intersemiotic attitudinal congruence and dissonance take place, multimodal texts will produce interpersonal intersemiotic complementation. Notably, if the ST does not include information represented by other modes, but this information is important for target viewers to judge the speaker's attitude or to understand what the speaker is saying, then the information conveyed by other modes should be added to deepen target viewers' understanding of the main characters and plot.

### *5.2 Omit Secondary Information to Highlight Key Information*

Omitting secondary information can effectively reduce the cognitive load of target viewers and help them grasp the key information. When watching a documentary, viewers need to use multiple cognitive abilities at the same time, such as watching the picture, listening to the voice, and reading the subtitle. The simultaneous occurrence of these actions will produce cognitive load. Observably, highlighting key information contributes to decreasing the consumption of cognitive resources in the process of reading subtitle. In this study, the key information refers to the key words in the central sentence said by the speaker, and it may also appear in the image, while secondary information is an auxiliary component in a sentence, and its function is to make the sentence complete and concrete. When secondary information interferes with key information, it should be omitted to ensure the priority of key information.

Taking ideational intersemiotic complementarity as an example, verbal and visual modes usually form sense relations such as repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, so viewers can get lots of information from visual modes. If the detailed information in the subtitle interferes with viewers' understanding, it can be eliminated so that viewers can capture the key information quickly and effectively. Specifically, the secondary information should be omitted in the following two situations. For one thing, the secondary information in the ST contradicts the information extracted from other modes. For another, the translation of secondary information may divert viewers' attention from the key information.

### *5.3 Clarify Meaning and Attitude in the ST to Target Viewers*

In order to convey the meaning and attitude of the ST more properly, translators usually need to explain the denotation and connotation of some words or sentences in a specific context. The denotation refers to the literal meaning, which is easier to obtain, whereas the connotation needs to be speculated according to the context. Since audiovisual works leave viewers limited time to think. To reduce viewers' cognitive load, translators tend to use specification techniques to elucidate the real intention and attitude of the speaker.

Taking compositional intersemiotic complementarity as an example, the information expressed by subtitle should constitute a coherent and unified whole with the information represented by other modes. With the help of information value, salience and framing, the translator can have a deeper understanding of the psychological activities of characters hidden behind texts, so that translators can convey the meaning to viewers more accurately, indicating that various modes work together to clarify the implied meaning of the ST.

#### 5.4 Use Expressions That Target Viewers Are Accustomed to

Considering the differences between English and Chinese, translators are supposed to replace unfamiliar expressions with some expressions that target viewers are accustomed to. Due to the differences in language, thinking, and culture, target viewers might be confused by some culture-loaded words or idiomatic expressions. So it is necessary for translators to adopt the substitution technique, which not only enhances the readability of the TT, but also narrows the distance between the ST and TT and improves viewers' acceptance.

Taking ideational intersemiotic complementarity as an example, translators can choose similar expressions to match the visual modes according to the repetition or synonymy relation between the visual and verbal modes. Besides, the relatively high occurrence of intersemiotic meronymy and hyponymy shows that translators should choose appropriate words to represent part or whole, as well as superordinate or subordinate, based on viewers' familiarity with the content displayed in the image.

### 6. Conclusion

This study conducts a multimodal discourse analysis of subtitle translation in the political documentary *Inside China: A Discovery Tour* under the intersemiotic complementarity framework. The findings are as follows. 1) Intersemiotic interaction is embodied in ideational, interpersonal and compositional aspects. 2) Four types of translation techniques have been observed: addition, omission, specification and substitution. 3) In the process of subtitle translation, translators should add important information missing in the ST; omit secondary information to highlight key information; clarify meaning and attitude in the ST to target viewers; and use expressions that target viewers are accustomed to. However, there are still some limitations. For instance, space does not permit analyzing a large number of examples, therefore only some typical cases are selected to demonstrate the intersemiotic interaction between various modes and the effect achieved by subtitle translation. This study not only deepens people's understanding of the interaction between verbal and non-verbal modes in the translation of audiovisual texts, but also provides some reference for future documentary translation studies as well as further contributes to the construction of China's good international image.

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