

Chapter 37

Exploring Intercultural Communication Through the Act of Translation in Subtitling

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how intercultural teaching and learning can take place through the practical act of translation in subtitling. The method discussed in this chapter uses audio-visual media in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) in higher education (HE). Translation in Subtitling is an undergraduate course offered to students with advanced Chinese competencies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in the United Kingdom. This applied language practice develops advanced skills in intercultural communicative competence (ICC) to students working on projects related to specific professional and cultural contexts. The audio-visual-driven course and its workshop style aim to provide a practical and fun intercultural learning experience, as well as to enhance employability by preparing students to work in a Chinese linguistic environment.

BACKGROUND

This chapter is an empirical study and discusses a teaching module of *Translation in Subtitling* offered to undergraduate students at an advanced language level in Chinese Studies at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). Chinese Studies was initially established as a joint honors degree under the umbrella of the Department of Religion and Theology in 2004. Later, it grew into a BA single and joint honors degree in the Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts, where it is located in the Lampeter Campus in middle of Wales, which is one of four UWTSD campuses along with Carmarthen, Swansea, and London. Building on a solid linguistic foundation in modern and classical Chinese, the Lampeter Chinese Studies course focuses on the study of China's history, philosophy, religions, film, and literature.

The *Translation in Subtitling* module was developed in 2012 and focuses on students in level 5 and 6. The term *level* in this context is a qualification framework in liaison with education and training for

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work according to the UK government (“What qualification levels mean,” 2017). In other words, students in Chinese Studies start their degree from Level 4. After a year of study, single honor students spend a year in China in order to carry on their intensive Chinese language learning. Those joint honor students have a choice to either take a gap year of studying in China or stay to finish their second year of study in Lampeter campus. Thus an advanced Chinese module is designed and offered to single honor students at Level 5 after they come back from China, whereas joint honor students will choose this course at their final year of Level 6.

This degree structure allows students to start their higher-level studies with a variety of language competences. In facing the variation of students’ language proficiencies, two vital questions—that is, what to teach and how to teach—need to be answered before a language tutor prepares an appropriate and beneficial Chinese language course. First, students’ second language (L2) acquisition at the advanced stage no longer heavily relies on the teaching-by method. Instead, students are learning L2 from what they consider more interesting than from what they have been taught. Second, students are more concerned with their communicative competence by engaging in meaning-focused communication. In this course, the communicative competence is composed of learners’ linguistic competence and their interaction competence. As a result, students should rely on their own (linguistic and nonlinguistic) resources and focus on the meaning of encoding and decoding messages, but no longer on linguistic form (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). According to the learning nature of students at the higher level, the design of advanced Chinese courses needs to consider developing students’ linguistic and interactional competence.

Rather than the traditional view of regarding language as an object to be studied, the *Translation in Subtitling* module develops Chinese language as a tool for communicating with the pedagogical construct of engaging learners in meaning-focused communication through the performance of tasks. This alternative approach in learning advanced Chinese focuses on two purposes: 1) the practical use of Chinese language at an advanced Chinese language competency and 2) self-regulated learning strategies students develop through the course.

SETTING THE STAGE

This chapter focuses on three sections. First, two areas in literature are highlighted on the stage of setting: 1) translation and specific subtitle translation and 2) intercultural communication competence (ICC) and intercultural learning. Second, following the research done in this section, the author outlines an essential course syllabus in the section “Case Description,” including pedagogical decisions made about content and teaching order. Differing from traditional textual translation, functional specificities in semiotic and pragmatic translation subtitles integrate the multimode and multimedia. Using subtitle translation as a method in advanced language learning offers visual assistance to students and advises on the importance of context and the use of multimode in effectively meaning convention. Translation subtitles are the media to practically approach L2, where the integration of intercultural communication with language learning is the focus of developing students’ self-regulated learning strategies, as in this course. Then, the ICC sets language into the learners’ discourse in developing the understanding of Chinese cultures. As this chapter is an empirical case study, a list of students’ work samples and their reflective comments further demonstrate their increasing intercultural competence and self-development in communicative competence. The last section, “Assessment Concerns,” discusses how to design assignments. Rather than regarding assessment as a final stage of marking student outcomes, task-based

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