

# A Study of Subtitle Translation in *Harry Potter 3* from the Perspective of Logico-semantic Image-text Relations

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**Abstract:** An increasing number of people are watching films in languages other than their native one, with subtitle translation playing a crucial role in ensuring effective comprehension. Most research on subtitle translation focuses on strategies and characteristics, using functional equivalence and skopos theory as frameworks, but pays insufficient attention to its multimodal nature. While films are inherently multimodal, previous studies often overlook the influence of other modalities, focusing mainly on how subtitles affect translation. This paper applies Martinec and Salway's logico-semantic image-text relations theory to analyze the subtitle translation of *Harry Potter 3* on the Bilibili platform. The analysis, focusing on enhancement, elaboration, and extension, reveals how logico-semantic image-text relations shape subtitle translation. Findings show that the translation integrates not only linguistic elements but also visual cues, character psychology, and the logical connection between shots, enriching the literature and demonstrating the practical value of the theory in subtitle translation.

**Keywords:** Logico-semantic image-text relations; Subtitle translation; *Harry Potter 3*

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## 1. Chapter 1 Introduction

### (1) Research background

With the rapid growth of globalization, cross-cultural communication has become more frequent, making translation essential for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps. The *Harry Potter* series, translated into over 70 languages and adapted into eight films, has become one of the most successful franchises, grossing over \$8 billion worldwide. (Yao, 2017) Since China's reform and opening up, many international films have been introduced to the domestic market, boosting the film industry and increasing subtitle translation activities. Subtitling plays a crucial role in facilitating audience comprehension in China. This paper uses Martinec and Salway's logico-semantic image-text relations theory to analyze the subtitle translation of *Harry Potter 3* on the Bilibili platform, focusing on enhancement, elaboration, and extension to examine how image-text relations influence subtitle translation.

### (2) Research significance

Subtitle translation facilitates film comprehension and cross-cultural communication. As more foreign films are introduced to China, the demand for skilled subtitle translators and effective translation theories is increasing. However, subtitle translation is more complex than simply translating words; it requires precision to broaden a film's impact and reach a global audience.

While the *Harry Potter* series has been widely studied, most research focuses on cross-cultural communication, narrative, cultural translation, and literary adaptation. Few studies explore subtitle translation in depth, especially regarding logico-semantic image-text relations. This gap in research highlights the need for further theoretical development to guide translators and researchers in the field of subtitle translation.

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## **2. Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **(1) Theoretical framework**

#### **1) Definition of logico-semantic image-text relations**

The logico-semantic image-text relations is a theory constructed by Martinec and Salway to analyze image-text relations. In order to clarify the relation between non-linguistic symbols, these two scholars use the expansion type of logico-semantic in Halliday's functional grammar to model the logico-semantic image-text relations, which contain three aspects: enhancement, elaboration, and extension. (Martinec & Salway, 2005)

The logico-semantic image-text relations evolve from Halliday's description of clause complex. Halliday proposes that units bigger than clauses (clause complex) should be represented using two different systems: interdependency and logico-semantic relation, which together create the functional framework for clause complexes. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) The degree of interdependency determines whether the clause is hypotaxis or parataxis; the type of logico-semantic relation determines whether the link between clauses is extension or projection. The extension is classified as follows: elaboration, extension, and enhancement. (ibid.)

Martinec and Salway constructed the logico-semantic image-text relations modal on this premise. The logico-semantic image-text relations have three aspects: elaboration, extension, and enhancement. According to Martinec and Salway, the term elaboration refers to when subtitles and screen content may explain one another — in other words, they are illustrations of one another. The term extension is when one side adds something new and relevant to the other side, expanding the semantic meaning of the original side. The mutual semantic description of environmental aspects such as time, place, cause and effect, and circumstances in order to account for each other is referred to as the enhancement relationship between the image and the text. (Martinec & Salway, 2005)

#### **2) Definition of subtitle translation**

Since the advent of sound films, film translation has evolved into a complex field, now termed audiovisual translation (AVT). Subtitle translation, a subfield of AVT, involves rendering spoken dialogue, visual text, and linguistic elements like songs into written text synchronized with on-screen action (Cintas & Remael, 2014). Scholars have offered various definitions: Birgit Nedergaard-Larsen describes it as "a condensed written translation of a largely spoken original" (1993), while Shuttleworth and Cowie define it as "the process of generating synchronized captions for cinema and television speech" (2004). Henrik Gottlieb provides a more comprehensive definition, identifying subtitle translation as written, additive, immediate, synchronous, and multimodal (199). Effective subtitle translation requires understanding the interplay between visual and linguistic elements, enabling translators to adapt content by adding, deleting, or modifying text to harmonize images and words for optimal viewer experience (Yan & Lan, 2021).

### **(2) Previous studies**

#### **1) Previous studies on logico-semantic image-text relations**

Martinec and Salway's theory is a further refinement of previous research. They propose the logico-semantic image-text relations as a framework for explaining the image-text relations. As a theory specializing in the analysis of the interaction between these two modalities, image-text relations began to gain popularity with the advent of multimodal media.

Barthes, a prominent French scholar and semiotician, laid the foundation for subsequent studies of logico-semantic image-text relations and conducted the first systematic examination of multimodality. He explicitly proposed to unify the structure of language and other symbolic structures within the same theoretical framework (Barthes, 1964), overcoming other linguists' nearly exclusive concentration on linguistic symbols. After examining the connection between text and image in newspapers, graphic ads, and photojournalism (Barthes, 1977), Barthes

claimed three fundamental relationships: anchorage, illustration, and relay.

Kress and Van Leeuwen embraced and refined Barthes's theory. They were the first to apply Halliday's theory to analysis logico-semantic image-text relations. Similar to language's ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, they suggest that pictures have comparable functions: representation, interaction, and composition. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, the relationship between image and text has certain restrictions. Such restrictions are achieved primarily through the placement of the information on the page, with the specific position of the page in the visual space giving special meaning to the corresponding graphic or text.

Martinec and Salway drew on Kress and Van Leeuwen's using functional grammar theory to investigate the logico-semantic image-text relations. By applying three main types of logico-semantic relations in Halliday's grammar, they proposed that the logico-semantic image-text relations should be explored from enhancement, elaboration, and extension aspects. (Martinec & Salway, 2005)

## **2) Previous studies on subtitle translation**

Western scholars have dominated film translation research since the 1960s, with journals like *Babel* laying the foundation for European translation studies (Cattrysse & Gambier, 2008). The field's terminology evolved from film translation to screen translation (ST) and audiovisual translation (AVT). Istvan Fodor's 1976 work, integrating linguistics, semiotics, aesthetics, and psychology, is considered the first comprehensive study of dubbing translation, significantly shaping Western film and TV translation theory (Fodor, 1976). Despite growing publications in journals like *Target* and *Meta*, film translation remains underrepresented compared to literary translation (Dong, 2007).

In China, film translation has a long history, but academic research is relatively recent. Between 1995 and 2008, only 442 out of 54,771 translation articles in the CNKI database focused on film translation. Professor Qian Shaochang highlights the undervaluation of film translation despite its vast audience, calling for greater academic recognition to match its social significance (Qian, 2000).

Since 2005, subtitle translation research has grown, with studies from 2008 onward focusing on strategies (e.g., naturalization, dissimulation) and cultural aspects (Liu et al., 2011). Recent research explores theater translation, subtitling, methodologies, translators, and cultural factors, reflecting the field's expanding scope (Wang et al., 2019).

## **(3) Summary**

Translation research, particularly in subtitle translation, often draws on theories such as functional equivalence, relevance theory, and purpose theory, while also exploring the subject from diverse perspectives, including linguistics, pragmatics, and multimodality. Among these, the impact of logico-semantic image-text relations on subtitle translation remains underexplored.

Key contributors to image-text relations include Barthes, Kress & Van Leeuwen, and Martinec & Salway. Barthes provided a qualitative description but did not explain the relationship's formation mechanism. Kress & Van Leeuwen's graphic position theory assigns value based on spatial placement. Martinec & Salway's system theory offers a more detailed and reasoned framework, providing stronger explanatory power for multimodal discourse analysis (Zeng, 2010:64).

## **3. Chapter 3 Analysis and Discussion**

### **(1) The case analysis of logico-semantic image-text relations**

#### **1) Enhancement showed in the subtitle translation**

According to Halliday's theory of functional grammar, enhancement is one clause (or subcomplex) that enhances

the meaning of another by qualifying it in one of several possible ways: by reference to time, place, manner, cause, or conditions. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) Based on this concept, Martinec and Salway propose that when an image and a text are associated by enhancement, one qualifies the other circumstantially. For a text to be considered as enhancing an image or vice versa, it has to be related to its ideational content. If in the logico-semantic image-text relations, one of the images or texts referred to or depicted new but related things, then there is extension. (Martinec & Salway, 2005)

Here are some cases analysis of subtitle translation that can be identified as the enhancement in logico-semantic image-text relations

Time	Original Sentence	Translation	Enhancement
08:46-11:47	What are you doing down there?	你坐地上干嘛	Directly shows Harry's position, enhancing image-text connection.
08:46-11:47	Come on.	那就起来吧	Translated to urge Harry to board the bus, fitting the context.
08:46-11:47	I'll get this. You get in.	我搬行李，你上车	"It" refers to the suitcase, enhancing image-text interrelation.
08:46-11:47	Come on.	好了	Reflects completion of an action, fitting the character's situation.
08:46-11:47	yes	开车	Matches the driver's excitement and the bus's movement.
20:30-20:32	That was my foot.	你踩到我脚了	Directly externalizes Ron stepping on Hermione's foot.
27:35-27:38	Amazing. Just with my voice.	了不起，我的歌喉真厉害	Reflects the Fat Lady's boast about her singing.
48:12-48:14	Serves her right. She was a terrible singer.	她活该。她唱歌像杀猪叫	Retains original meaning with a vivid Chinese expression.
88:52-89:02	Come on.	上	Translates to an action command, fitting the evasion scene.
88:52-89:02	Move	闪开	Reflects the action of dodging the willow branch.
88:52-89:02	Duck	趴下	Reflects the action of diving to avoid attack.
97:41-97:42	You should leave.	你该过去了	Incorporates position info, translating "go" as "过去".
100:30-100:32	Hermione! Bad idea. Bad idea.	别过去，别过去	Externalizes Ron's discouragement clearly.
120:50-120:51	Any time now	他就要来了	Validates the picture info, fitting Harry's expectation.
125:49-125:50	How did you get there?	你们怎么蹦那去了	Reflects Ron's surprise at their sudden appearance.

## 2) Elaboration showed in the subtitle translation

What is referred to as elaboration in functional grammar is when one clause elaborates on the meaning of another by further specifying or describing it. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) The examination of the logico-semantic relationship between image and text gives special attention to the discrepancy between what the image depicts and what the language offers. For a text to be considered elaborating an image or vice versa, the image and the text are of the same level of generality, expressing a piece of information in two different ways. (Martinec & Salway, 2005)

Here are some examples of translations that demonstrate the elaboration aspect of logico-semantic relations between image and text.

Time	Original Sentence	Translation	Elaboration
08:52-08:55	Let's not wait for the grass to grow.	别在这儿瞎耽误功夫	Combines the conductor's gestures and words to urge Harry to act quickly.
09:42-09:45	Take her away.	开车吧	Adjusted to fit the context of starting the bus, not a literal translation.
39:40-39:43	It's like trying to catch smoke.	抓他就像水中捞月	Adapted to a Chinese idiom to avoid confusion while retaining the meaning.
45:55-45:56	I'm very impressed.	你很不错	Simplified to direct praise, fitting the context of Lupin's approval.
67:05-67:06	I'm gonna be ready!	我就跟他拼了	Added Harry's emotional intent, emphasizing his determination.

69:19-69:20	That would be extraordinary.	不然也太神了	Combined image info and character attitude to reflect Lupin's reassurance.
71:18-71:19	That is saying something.	很了不起了	Externalized the semantic content to praise Harry's achievement clearly.

### 3) Extension showed in the subtitle translation

Extension refers to one clause contributing something new to the meaning of another clause in logico-semantic interactions between language units. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004:405) The analysis of the logico-semantic relationship between image and text focuses on the contrast between what the image portrays and what the language delivers. If one of the images or texts augments the other with additional, relevant content, this is referred to as an extended relationship.

Here are some examples of translations that demonstrate the extension aspect of logico-semantic relations between image and text.

Time	Original Sentence	Translation	Extention
02:37-02:38	Can I tempt you, Marge?	来点酒吗	Adds "wine" based on the image of Uncle Vernon holding a bottle and glass.
66:57-66:59	He was their friend.	他们是朋友 / 算什么朋友	First translation is literal; second adds Harry's rage and questioning intent.
86:28-86:30	The execution shall dispatch...	斩首处决	Adds formality and specificity to reflect the hippogriff's death sentence. Short translation also makes it easy for audience to understand

## (2) The effects of logico-semantic image-text relations on subtitle translation

### 1) Effects of enhancement

When the translation process of movie subtitles enhances, environmental elements such as time, place, manner, cause, or conditions are added to the subtitles to create a logical relationship between the previous and subsequent scenes. Throughout the process of translating the movie *Harry Potter 3*, the subtitle translation team made sure to keep in mind the logico-semantic relations that exist between the image and the text. As a result, they were able to successfully apply the enhancement to the subtitle translation.

There were several instances of good translations that were accomplished, but there were also some errors that demonstrated the potential for further advancement. For example, in 5:50-5:51, "Don't you dare!" is translated as "滚开". In this scene, Marge may drift away at any moment, and in the previous moment, she was urging Vernon to help her, but here she says "滚开" to Vernon, who is pulling her. Taking into account Marge's dog-loving character traits in the early stages, along with the fact that her dog keeps biting Vernon and the reality that Vernon tells the dog to "Get off," it can be deduced that Marge is not pleased with Vernon's comment about her dog. So here, Marge's line "Don't you dare!" can be translated as "你敢说它!". This translation also enhances the logical relationship between the subtitle and the next scene, in which Vernon apologizes and lets go of his hands, facilitating the audience's understanding.

Another possible improvement that could be made in the translation appeared in the movie around 13:28-13:31. The Minister of Magic tells Harry that Marge has been appropriately treated. The original sentence is "She has been properly punctured and her memory modified." The translator interprets this sentence as "她已被恢复原状, 那段记忆也被修改了." When combined with the previous scene in which Marge was floating and inflating, the sentence could be translated as "我们给她放了气, 并修改了记忆." It also adds a tinge of interest while maintaining the connection to the previous scene.

### 2) Effects of elaboration

When elaboration is employed in subtitle translation, the original meanings are preserved, but the expressions

are altered in conjunction with the picture information in order to facilitate audience comprehension. In the translation of *Harry Potter 3* on the Bilibili video platform, there are several instances of the subtitle translation that could reflect the elaboration aspect of logico-semantic image-text relations.

A good demonstration occurs between 91:24 and 91:25 in the film. Following the separation of twelve years, Professor Lupin and Sirius are brought back together in this scenario. Professor Lupin is feeling particularly emotional at the sight of Sirius and says, "Looking rather ragged, aren't we." The translator adapts the sentence to "你成这幅邋遢样了," which more instinctively fits Sirius's picture in the film. If a strategy of word-for-word translation is used, the expression in the original text is a rhetorical question, which may make it difficult for the Chinese audience to grasp. The line, however, appears for only one second on the screen. Considering the limited time period, the subtitle translation team externalizes the implicit meaning of the character's line into the subtitle translation. This helps to reduce the amount of reading that the viewer needs to do. This facilitates the audience's rapid and accurate comprehension of Professor Lupin's remarks. Although the expression in the text does not correlate to the original line, it communicates more effectively.

### **3) Effects of extension**

When extension is applied in movie subtitle translation, the movie's image information is expanded by adding additional information to the translation. There are some examples of the subtitle translation that could reflect the extension aspect of logico-semantic image-text relations.

One example occurs between 93:37 and 93:38. In this scene, a furious verbal confrontation erupts between Snape, Lupin, and Sirius. They confront one another, and Sirius mocks Snape's wrong judgment, calling it his "habit." The translator reiterates the original subtitle, "He can't help it. It's a habit." to "他蠢惯了，控制不住," adjusting the expression while retaining the original meaning. The semantics indicated by nouns in English are expressed by verbs in Chinese, which is more in accordance with the Chinese habit of utilizing more verbs and more pertinent to the tense plot. With just a few translated lines, the conflict and past between the characters are successfully shown, easing the burden of understanding on the audience.

### **(3) Summary**

The most obvious result to emerge from this case analysis is that the Bilibili video platform's translation of *Harry Potter 3* considers image information like time, place, cause, conditions, or previous actions as important as linguistic text. There is a strong correlation between the symbols in the audiovisual text, and the subtitle translator should have a thorough understanding of the entire film as a foundation for translation, as well as in-depth knowledge of the correlation between the symbols and the ability to use elaboration, extension, and enhancement in a flexible manner. Strengthen the relationship between visual images and subtitles, and through subtitle translation, increase the logical connection between the previous and subsequential image. To guarantee a positive viewing experience for the audience, the translator should avoid translating words separately from the image.

## **4. Chapter 4 Conclusion**

### **(1) Main findings**

This paper applies Martinec and Salway's logico-semantic image-text relations theory to analyze the subtitle translation of *Harry Potter 3* on Bilibili. Focusing on enhancement, elaboration, and extension, the study explores how image-text relations influence translation. The findings show that Bilibili translators generally provide high-quality translations, effectively integrating visual and textual elements. They restate graphic information by combining visual symbols with text, making adaptations to align both for coherence, including contextual adjustments and modifications to fit Chinese expression. These results are consistent with previous studies, such as



Chen Yupin and Zhang Caihua's (2017) multimodal analysis of *The Croods*, which emphasizes the need for subtitle translation to go beyond direct equivalence due to the multimodal nature of audiovisual content. Unlike reading, where text can be revisited, subtitles are transient and require concise, logical translations that align with the image-text relationship. When direct translation causes ambiguity or clashes with Chinese norms, enhancement strategies are used to clarify meaning. In conclusion, subtitle translation demands fidelity not only to dialogue but also to visual elements, ensuring a smooth viewing experience for the audience.

## (2) Limitations and further researches

The focus of this paper is exclusively on how logico-semantic image-text relations influence subtitle translation, excluding other multimodal elements like music, sound effects, and picture orientation, which also contribute to meaning formation and warrant deeper multimodal discourse analysis. Unlike traditional semiotics, social semiotics emphasizes practice and applies systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to interpret diverse signs and practices (Zhang, 2013). While SFL and semiotics heavily influence multimodal discourse analysis, the field's interdisciplinary nature requires collaboration across disciplines for a more comprehensive understanding of multimodal meaning (Zhu, 2007). Future research must expand beyond SFL to advance discourse analysis and linguistics.

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