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## A Translation Semiotics Analysis on the *Thumb Fight*

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### Abstract

The world is familiar with Chinese wine but neglects its attractive partner, Thumb Fight (拇战). The Thumb Fight is a precious traditional Chinese drinking game. However, its rare research still focuses on its history, not the translation process during its dynamic playing logic. The semiotic is access to logic from Peircean. The translation process during Thumb Fight can be developed under the guidance of translation semiotics. This article analyzes the Thumb Fight playing process's signs translating process based on the translation semiotics with Peirce's triadic sign relations. All sign interaction is translating from translation semiotics in the broadest sense. The significant signs involved in translating are thought signs, finger signs, and oral signs. The article starts from a single player's side to divide its translation sign system into three stages: opening ceremony, fighting progress, and winning result. Furthermore, to better understand its dynamic competition process, the article constructs a translation conceptual framework to analyze its signs translation, with the signs-- objects-- interpretant triadic relations. In the following standard case study, the theoretical analysis framework of translation semiotics can effectively show the process and behavior of signs translation.

**Keywords:** Thumb Fight, Translation Semiotics, Translating Process

### 1. The Chinese wine

Thumb Fight is a representative of traditional Chinese popular drinking games. As for the history and development of traditional Chinese drinking games, we may start from its growing soil Chinese wine chronologically with essential landmarks.

The story of the Chinese wine may be counted back to the first tale---the primary drunken ape-men making wine (醉猿酿酒). That earliest Chinese ancestors made the fermented fruits drinkings, 50,000 years ago, by their accidental ignorance of the hidden collected wild fruits, which may produce saccharomycetes, the natural microorganism for fermentation in a small town Jiangsu Province, under the hot and humid forests. After that chance, it is not until the creation of *Qu*(曲) that proclaims the emergence of the original true Chinese wine in Shang Dynasty (c.1600BC-1046BC). *Qu* could cultivate microorganisms to make wine with raw materials, such as grains and beans. It was the Chinese unique wine technique at that time and the sole *Qu* skill was introduced to Japan, India, and Southeastern Asia later. It was not until the end of the 19th century that Europeans learned how to make *Qu* and brew wine, more than 2,000 years later than that in China (Xu 1989, p.2). For a long time, *Qu* has been the only wine-brewing technique worldwide. Based on that extraordinary technique advance, the

Chinese wine has popularized among the Chinese ancestors. Besides the government-franchised wine-brewing factories in the Tang and Song Dynasties (c. 618 AD - 1234 AD), the private wine-brewing climate in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties (c. 1271 AD - 1840 AD), more and more private brewing wine came into being. Thousands of years have witnessed the Chinese ancestors' efforts to make a real Chinese wine, and it also witnessed the development of Chinese wine's attractive partner, the traditional Chinese drinking games.

## 2. The Chinese drinking games

When there is a drink, there is a drinker. The drinkers would first enjoy the pure flavor of the Chinese wine. However, the only Chinese wine would not satisfy the drinker's heart. Then, they agree tacitly that Chinese wine needs an attractive partner. None would expect that the dull soldiers created the first partner in their wild camp in the late Western Zhou Dynasty to the Spring and Autumn Period (c. 770 BC - 476 BC). Those soldiers first played wrestle and selected one referee. That can be very rudiment of the original drinking game. Then, they shot with an arrow to play. After that, they threw an arrow into one strict-sized vessel at an appointed position. Throwing the arrow was the rudiment of the subsequent Chinese drinking games. We call it *Pitch-pot* (投壺), which can be seen occasionally in some entertaining activities nowadays. With the acceptance of pitch-pot among ordinary folks, the then literate created the recitation to play over drinking. People agree to call the recitation type *Elegant Games* (雅令) and the pitch-pot type *Popular Games* (通令). The traditional Chinese drinking game got a unique Chinese name, *Jiuling* (酒令), by Jia Kui (賈逵), a litterateur from the Latter Han Dynasty (c. 25 AD - 195 AD) (Xu1989, p.13). Because the Emperor Wu of the Former Han(汉武帝)(c.141BC - 87 BC) liked to guess the objects hidden under a cover during drinking, there was a new playing way--- *Shifu* (射覆). She meant to guess the items; fu meant the items covered under covers. Since then, the guessing element has dominated the traditional Chinese drinking games and replaced the recitation and power competition. In the Southern Dynasty (c. 420 AD - 589 AD) and the Northern Dynasty (c. 386 AD - 581 AD), players introduced music, dance, acrobatics, versification, and riddle into the drinking games to color its simple guessing element. Traditional Chinese drinking games waited for their prime age in the Tang Dynasty (c. 618 AD - 907 AD). It began to adopt classical tools, bamboo-made *chip-counters* (筹)(Xu1989, p.22), for scoring and enriched the Popular Games with three typical ones: *Lyling* (律令), *Toupan* (骰盤), *Paoda* (抛打)(Geng & Jin 1991, p.13). The third one was mainly consisted *Thumb Fight* (拇战), *Palm Fight* (抵掌), and *Gesture Fight* (手势), which the literate and Chinese geisha invented at that time (Geng & Jin 1991, p.16). *Thumb* meant fingers, and *Fight* meant to beat opponents by guessing the correct number of both players' fingers in advance. Playing Thumb Fight was competing to guess the finger numbers extended by the two players in advance. Players' mouths spoke out the guessing number. When players played Thumb Fight, they would extend fingers while speaking out the guessing numbers. It involves finger gestures and oral words, both in numbers. Since its emergence, the Thumb Fight has gained millions of Chinese fans nationwide. It has been played and loved by many drinkers until now, after the May Fourth Movement or New Culture Movement Revolution in 1919, which has advocated the use of colloquial language. Due to that movement, most classical-prose-oriented and ancient Chinese-used literary games have vanished. Only the Thumb Fight lives up to now. It remains its primary playing regulations and rules except for some changes in the colloquial expressions. We may safely conclude that the Thumb Fight can be a lucky traditional Chinese drinking game compared with the other disappeared games.

## 3. Three significant signs of Thumb Fight

Thumb Fight requires two apparent elements from its rule: oral number and finger number. The oral number is the guessing number of both players' finger numbers in advance, while the finger number is the total number of each player's extending finger. By its winning rule, the winner should speak out the correct total finger number of both players, including his opponent. It is the oral number that decides the winning results. To be a good Thumb Fight player means to have a high guessing rate of both players' following extending finger numbers in advance. The guessing rate is closely related to the player's observation and prediction of the finger number of his opponent. The winner should monitor his opponent's finger changes and some relevant subtle expressions, everything that may help him make a precise judgment. The precise judgment may consist of precalculation after a keen observation. The precise judgment and precalculation may result in a correct oral number which is just the

correct total number of both players. Unlike the perceived oral number and finger number, the precise judgment and precalculation cannot be perceived by the others, except for the players themselves. The latter two are processed in players' thoughts. They are the guessing link through the operation of Thumb Fight. Therefore, we may call it the third element: thought. The Thumb Fight has three elements: oral number, finger number, and thought. It seems that the playing of Thumb Fight is the guessing of a correct number. The playing can be taken as a logical guessing competition.

“The term *semiotic* was first used in modern times by John Locke, who mentioned it near the end of his masterwork, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke only suggested a division of science in which semiotic would form the third of three sections, and would be identified with logic. It was first used as a term denoting a specific and detailed theory by Peirce, who spent the greater portion of his life working out his semiotic, which for him was a normative theory of logic” (Rochberg-Halton & McMurtrey 1983, p.129). From Peirce, Semiotics can be a way to access the human's logic operation, which can be the best analyzing tool for in-depth analysis of the Thumb Fight's process among those three elements. Eco defines that “Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Eco 1979, p.9). According to Peirce, everything can be a sign, and a sign is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respects or capacity” (CP2.228). The oral number, finger number, and thought can be signs from Peircean's view because the oral number stands for the player's guessing of the total finger numbers, the finger number stands for the number of the fingers actually extended out by each player, and the thought stands for results of the hidden guessing within the player's minds. They stand for something in some respects of the Thumb Fight playing. Peirce elaborates that every element has its counterpart in words in man's consciousness. “It is that the word or sign which man uses is the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign, [...] thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought” (CP 5.314). From Peirce, the thought is a sign. No substantial distinction exists between a man and a word. Both men and words are signs. Then, the guessing thought can be a sign.

Moreover, both numbers are the results of the corresponding thought. They are the train of thought, and they can be regarded as the train of signs. A language is a social system of signs mediating the responses of members of a community to one another and to their environment (Morris 1971, p.48). The oral number is spoken out in the Chinese spoken language. The finger number uses its habitual expression method to remind people of the number. For example, players can read finger numbers as --- one when they perform a thumb-up. The finger number stands for the numerical number. Oral number and finger number can be signs, and the train signs of thought signs if we call the thought a thought sign.

Besides the representing capability of signs, the crucial sign---object---interpretant triadic relations exist within a qualified sign. Through the Thumb Fight, there are three possible signs: oral number, finger number, and thought. The thought generates the oral number and finger number from its operation process. From Peirce, “Every thought is a sign”(CP1.538). The thought first is a sign, its object is the observation image of the finger sign in the player's mind, and its calculation within the player's mind is the interpretant of that finger sign. The thought sign is qualified and valid from Peircean's triadic relation. We may safely call it the thought sign now. The oral number first is a sign from the Chinese language sign system, its object is the Chinese numeral number within the player's mind, and its interpretant is the winning results of the Thumb Fight since the correct oral number decides the winner. The oral number is a qualified sign with the crucial triadic relation. For memory's benefit, we may safely call it the oral sign. The finger number first extends a different finger form to stand for a number as a sign, its object is the actual numeral number it stands for, and its interpretant is the observation and precalculation of the changing laws of those finger forms. The finger number is a qualified sign with the crucial triadic relation. For memory's benefit, we may safely call it the finger sign.

From Peircean's sign definition, we may have the thought sign, oral sign, and finger sign through the Thumb Fight playing progress. We may know that the thought signs would translate into the oral signs and finger signs during its playing process from its operating laws. That translation would not stop until the winner came out of every playing round. As for its translation mechanism, we may refer to the translation semiotics for help.

#### 4. A translation semiotics interpretation of Thumb Fight

Victoria Welby (1837-1912) has used “translative thinking” to describe man’s capacity for signification, and an automatic process “in which everything suggests or reminds us of something else” (Welby 1983 [1903], p. 34). For Welby the term “significance” indicates the maximum expression value of a sign as it is enhanced through ongoing translative-interpretative processes (Susan 1992, p.254). Translation is a method of investigation and discovery (Welby 1983, p. 150). Translation Semiotics, a newly emerging branch of semiotics, aims to explain all the possible signs of translations and related issues based on Peircean’s semiotics. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) has mentioned the nature of language signs with the mixture of translation and signs. From the Peircean aspect, the meaning of any language sign is to translate into a sign that can be further replaced, especially a more developed sign (CP 5. 594). As for the meaning of translation, it may be a different term used in other research. It refers to the translated works or translating process in translatology study; it means a process of moving in technical expression; it means the process by which a sequence of nucleotide triplets in a messenger RNA molecule gives rise to a specific sequence of amino acids during synthesis of a polypeptide or protein in biology. However, it means that a sign is transformed from one form into another form in semiotics (Jia 2019, p.14). It may safely say that translation semiotics studies the transformation of all signs in a Broadway. In a broad sense, as long as it has a referential meaning, everything can be a sign, which implies the mutual transformation between linguistic signs and non-linguistic signs, tangible signs and intangible signs, natural signs and artificial signs. It also happens to be the broad sense of translation (Jia 2019, p.14).

From the perspective of broad translation, the interactive use of signs has constituted translation behavior (Jia 2016, p.94). Thumb Fight needs to translate thought signs into oral and finger signs simultaneously. Its translating means translating the hidden imperceptible thought signs into visible finger signs and audible oral signs. Therefore, playing Thumb Fight is a sign translation process from intangible thought signs to tangible finger and oral signs. Thumb Fight has the properties of supra material form and cross-sign carrier. Translation semiotics is defined as a branch of semiotics (Jia 2016, p.95). It uses semiotic methods to explore the sign transformation and related issues during translating. The research objects of translation semiotics include converting tangible and intangible signs and related issues (Jia 2016, p.96).

Given that, this paper intends to use the theory of translation semiotics to explain (1) the translation process, (2) the translation semiotics theoretical analysis framework of Thumb Fight, and (3) use this framework to analyze the winning process of Thumb Fight.

The Thumb Fight has perceivable finger signs, oral signs, and imperceptible thought signs. The playing of Thumb Fight is just translating the thought signs into the finger signs and oral signs. With the help of translation semiotics, its mysterious operating process can be explained in a compelling translating way. For Peirce, “Interpretation is merely another word for translation” (EP 2: 388). As long as there are signs, there must be translation; there must be translation as long as there are interactive usages of signs. Because the condition for a sign to become a sign is translation, only through translation can a sign signify, and only if it can signify can it be called a sign (Jia 2019, p.15).

For Peirce, “I define a Sign as anything which on the one hand is so determined by an Object and on the other hand so determines an idea in a person’s mind, that this latter determination, which I term the Interpretant of the sign, is thereby mediately determined by that Object.” (CP 8. 343). Translation semiotics involves the triadic relation between signs, objects, and interpretants when interpreting the transformation of signs in translation, that is, when analyzing the translation process. The triadic relationship of signs, “A sign, therefore, has a triadic relation to its Object and to its Interpretant” (CP8. 343). “In brief, a sign has two objects and three interpretants. Objects are divided into Immediate Objects and Dynamical Objects. The Immediate Object is the object as the sign represent it, and the Dynamical Object is the efficient but not immediate object. Interpretants are divided into Immediate Interpretant, Dynamical Interpretant and Normal Interpretant. The Immediate Interpretant is the Interpretant represented or signified in the Sign, the Dynamical Interpretant is the effect produced on the mind by the Sign, and the Normal Interpretant is the effect produced on the mind by the Sign after sufficient development of thought” (CP8. 343).

The Thumb Fight is a one-on-one game performed by chanting numbers and extending fingers. In the audience's eyes, Thumb Fight is a number guessing game. For the convenience of reading, both numbers are represented by cardinal numbers. However, Players often avoid calling out only monotonous numbers since the game is usually played at a wedding banquet or on a wine table during festivals. Instead, they use auspicious words after numbers with good wishes and shout in a varied accented tone. The oral number is usually formed like numerals + interesting words. In the following words, we would adopt the Chongqing Thumb Fight as an example to elaborate on that. For example **Six** : *Liuliushun*(<sup>liù liù shùn</sup>六六顺) The pronunciation of Liu here is close to Chinese Mandarin <sup>liù</sup>六 (Six). Liuliu means the cardinal number six in English. Shun here symbolizes all the best. Liuliushun symbolizes all the best. **Nine** : *Jiubiliangshigui*(<sup>jiǔ bǐ liáng shí guì</sup>酒比粮食贵) is a Chongqing native saying. The pronunciation of Jiu here is close to Chinese Mandarin <sup>jiǔ</sup>九 (Nine). The first 酒, in the beginning, is a homophony of 九. Jiu means wine in English, bi means to contrast, liangshi means grain, and gui means more expensive. Its whole meaning is that the wine is more expensive than grain. It is a Chongqing native saying without special meaning. It is just for fun.

Two players chant a number while extending their fingers. Both players can use one hand to finish the extending fingers' requirement. Since one hand can extend from zero fingers to five fingers, the finger numbers can be varied from zero to five. Moreover, the chanting numbers should cover the total sum of the extended fingers from both sides. The chanted numbers are usually valid from zero to ten. Therefore, the chanting number can range from zero to ten based on the rules of Thumb Fight. The finger number also has typical Chongqing characteristics. **Zero**: the player punches a fist; **One**: the player extends his thumb. **Two**: the player had better extend his thumb and middle finger altogether. **Three**: the player extends his thumb, index finger, and middle finger altogether. **Four**: the player extends his thumb, middle finger, ring finger, and little finger altogether. **Five**: the player extends all his five fingers like an open palm.

According to Peirce, "The sign is almost (is representative of) that thing" (CP 5. 309). There come the oral signs and finger signs. From Eco, "As will be seen, a sign can stand for something else to somebody only because this 'standing-for' relation is mediated by an interpretant"(Eco 1979, p.15). Both signs come from the player's mind after guessing the thought. It means that the thought is the interpretant of both signs. The thought sign plays the most significant role in playing Thumb Fight subconsciously. Peirce believes, "Every thought, or cognitive representation, is of the nature of a sign" (CP 8. 191). Therefore, the thought sign is essential and valid. The Thumb Fight has three significant signs of translating: oral signs, finger signs, and thought signs. For the reading convenience, the *finger sign* is in bold and italic form hereafter, and the **oral sign** is in bold form hereafter.

#### 4.1 The translation process in the Thumb Fight from one side

The Chongqing Thumb Fight usually has two primary lead-in phrases as chanting expressions to start its opening ceremony: one is *Good Brothers*(哥两好), the other is *Disorderly Chopping Firewood*(乱劈柴). More and more Chongqing players are inclined to play the latter to avoid embarrassment since the former embarrassed the players between sons and fathers. The two lead-in phrases would usually repeat twice for the players' preparation for the competition from the third chanting. When the players are playing lead-in phrases, they would thumb up, squeeze the other four fingers into a fist, and tap the thumb and the back of the hand lightly to show the friendship first, competition later. The first two oral chanting and thumb finger touching are just a playing ritual and have no practical effect on the competition result. From Peirce, all symbols are relative to understanding. (CP 1.559). Since the first two chanting and thumb finger touching symbolize the opening of the Thumb Fight competition, we may define them as symbol signs here. It shows the starting of translating process in Thumb Fight playing.

To focus on the core playing the part of the Thumb Fight for translating interpretation, and for a better understanding of its whole translating process, the whole playing process of Thumb Fight from the third chanting can be generalized into (Figure 1): (1) opening ceremony: the hidden intangible thought signs; (2) fighting

progress: the simultaneous appearance of the finger signs and oral signs; (3) winning result: the coincident consistency of the oral signs with the finger signs end each round of Thumb Fight.

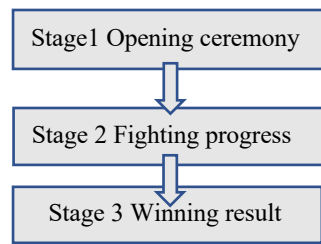


Figure 1

From Peirce's ideas, "All thought being performed by means of signs, logic may be regarded as the science of the general laws of signs" (CP 1.191). Stage (1) is the subconscious or intangible thought of the player's plan of his finger signs and oral signs before extending. Peirce points that the connected signs must have a Quasi-mind (CP 4.551). Strictly speaking, stage (1) equals a quasi-mind a sign system. Because every thought can be a sign, including the logic translation in mind, the connected oral signs, finger signs, and thought signs must have a quasi-mind. After stage (1), stage (2) is the simultaneous appearance of finger and oral signs. That is to say, stage (2) is a showing stage, which is a translating link. During the stage, players would translate their unperceived thought signs into perceived signs, one visible finger sign, and the other invisible oral sign. The stage (2) system should be the most complicated and exciting system of Thumb Fight. It would be the core part of the working process of Thumb Fight. Stage (3) is the last.

Moreover, stage (3) is not an independent sign system in general. On the contrary, it is a dependent sign system that is decided by stage (2). Although it seems not so influential on the Thumb Fight, especially in a one-shot playing, the following signs of players in the multi-shot playing process matters. During the multi-shot playing process, stage (3) would be a precondition of the player's next new round of stage (1). In other words, the players would changeably translate their signs in stage (1) and may show different varied signs in stage (2) to achieve their envisaged goals in stage (3). This translating flow would be circulating round after round. The number of rounds is decided by the particular rules of the Thumb Fight in terms of its time and place. Before each playing, all the involved players would agree on the number of rounds and other details.

We have a clear outline of the single player's system. It has three essential stages: stages (1), (2), and (3). It is worth mentioning that the three stages are dissected from a single player's angle. More precisely, the three main stages are equal for every player, more like a programmatic structure for every player. That means every involved player of Thumb Fight would think in stage (1), showing in stage (2) and have their corresponding results in stage (3) It is a dynamic translating flow for every player.

However, it only seems separated from its showing way and written introduction. In fact, among its whole translating process, the three stages may interact invisible or unperceived by some players because only one player cannot launch the Thumb Fight. It needs at least two out of the number of players required when it is playing. Furthermore, only the two players are playing the same round. Players play the drinking game. During its playing, the two players both have corresponding sign systems simultaneously. As a result, the playing process of Thumb Fight has brought about two playing sign systems from two separate players' angles. For the convenience of understanding the translation logic, we may introduce the player's thinking and playing sign system beginning with its oral sign and finger sign in three stages.

#### 4.2 The translation process in Thumb Fight on both sides

Peirce states that thought is the whole world of triadic relations and it might be included in consciousness (CP 8. 283), and it is the chief mode of representation (CP 2. 274). A sign has a triadic relation to its Object and to its Interpretant (CP 8. 343). In Thumb Fight, the triadic relations should be thought signs, oral signs, and finger signs. Reviewing the strict chanting and extending rule of the Thumb Fight: both players should be chanting

and extending simultaneously. The proceeding of the Thumb Fight is the translating from thought signs into oral signs and finger signs simultaneously. Peirce mentions, “The whole purpose of a sign is that it shall be interpreted in another sign; and its whole purport lies in the special character which it imparts to that interpretation” (CP 8. 191).

Furthermore, “This is the whole world of triadic relations, thought. We are aware of it, and thus it might be included in consciousness” (CP 8. 283). In the Thumb Fight, the thought signs translate into two signs: oral signs and finger signs. The triadic relations from a single player’s angle between the three signs can be pictured (Figure 2) as follows:

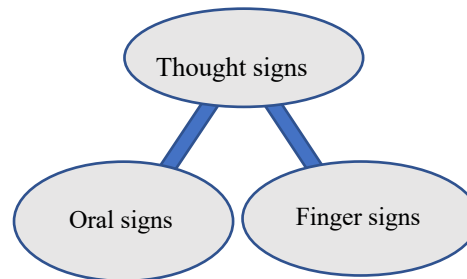


Figure 2

From the perspective of translation semiotics, the translation process is infinitely recursive. The translator must constantly examine whether the interpretants can reasonably explain the relations between the signs and their corresponding objects. In the beginning, players translate the hidden thought signs from quasi-mind into oral signs and finger signs. Both layers would translate the opponent’s finger signs and oral signs from Peircean triadic relations of signs. Peirce believes that the sign has an object and interpretant and is in the Quasi-mind (CP 4. 536). The Thumb Fight starts from the thought signs, and its finger signs and oral signs are its objects after translating. In Peircean’s statement, the two objects are Immediate object and Dynamical object, and the latter by some means determines the signs of its representation while the former just a sign represents itself d (CP 4. 536). In practice, when the player chants out a numerically correct oral sign, the whole round would end immediately. There would be no more mind translation and further new signs and objects translating when the playing process ends. Therefore, from this aspect, the oral sign would be the dynamical sign of its quasi-mind sign.

The player would extend his finger sign under his quasi-mind’s order from the third time. The extending finger sign can be the immediate object of the player’s quasi-mind sign. It is just the represented sign from its quasi-mind sign system for every player. After seeing the opponent’s third finger sign, the player would take the finger sign into his mind again to interpret. During his interpretation of the opponent’s finger signs, he would judge and predict the opponent’s next finger sign, the correct finger number. Based on the correct finger sign, the player can show a correct oral sign, a correct oral number, to act as the dynamical object of its quasi-mind sign to end the round. The crucial judgment and prediction part is a translation of the already clear message of the opponent’s finger sign, the immediate object. We may have a Figure 3.



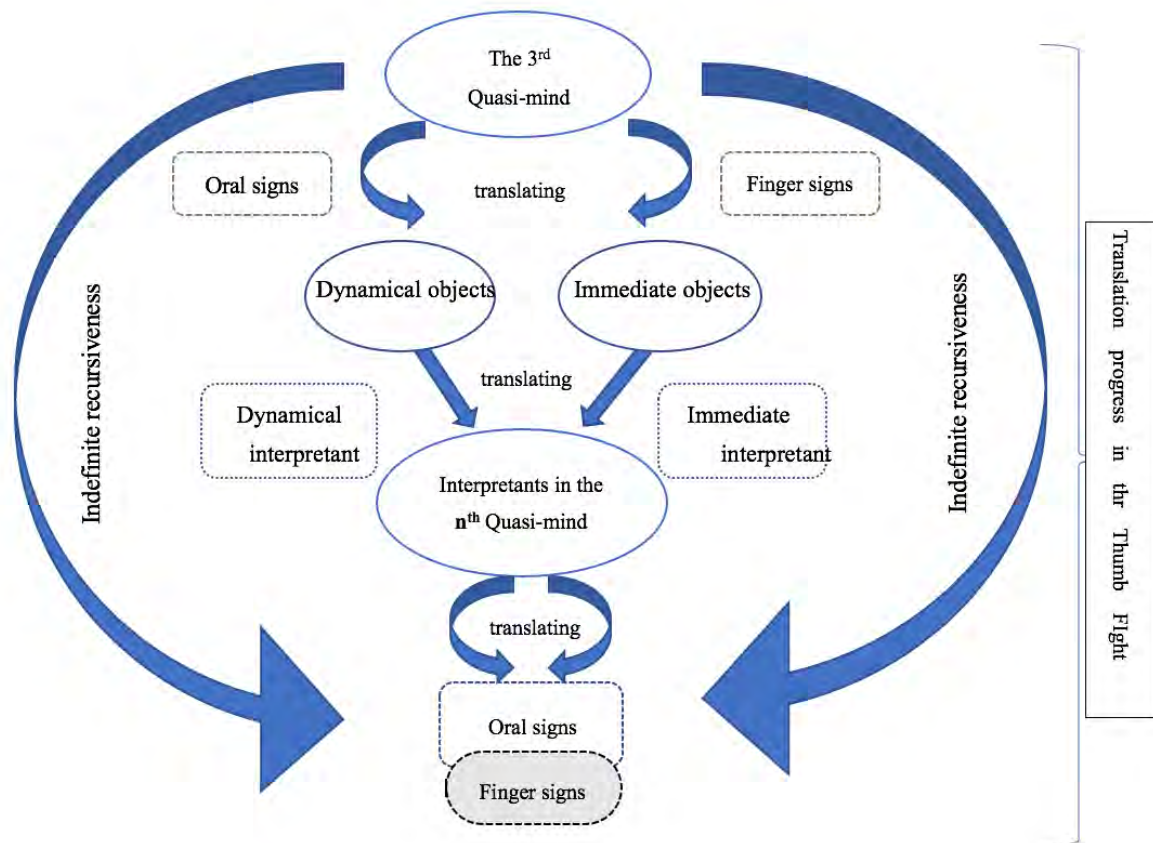


Figure 3

“[...]In regard to the Interpretant we have equally to distinguish, in the first place, the Immediate Interpretant, which is the interpretant as it is revealed in the right understanding of the Sign itself, and is ordinarily called the meaning of the sign; while in the second place, we have to take note of the Dynamical Interpretant which is the actual effect which the Sign, as a Sign, really determines...” (CP 4. 536)

The translation is sure to be carried in the player’s mind. This time is the second time of the translation of the mind. We may not call it a quasi-mind. It is more like a repeated mind interpreting state referring to its proper working procedure. Here the repeated refers to its systematic, repeated state, not the repetition of the content.

The repeated mind translating consists of two interpretants: the immediate interpretant, and the dynamical interpretant. The former means the received finger sign, and it is also the immediate object of quasi-mind sign. More precisely, it is the already known opponent’s extending finger number because it reveals the proper understanding of the finger sign itself. In other words, when the finger number is two, the immediate interpretant should be figure two, not three or other figures. As a result, the former is the immediate interpretant—the latter works after the former. The latter are guesses made by the player based on known numbers and observations made in the previous round. Its goal is to guess the correct finger number of the opponent in the coming round. Moreover, the guesses would directly cause the player’s next potential right guessing oral number, the oral sign. Therefore, the latter interpretant is the dynamical interpretant because it affects the following signs, both finger signs and oral signs. Why?

Considering its winning rules, the player would speak out the correct oral sign. Here the correct oral sign means the correct total number of the finger sign of two parties, the player himself and his opponent. The player needs to guess the opponent’s finger sign and extend the right finger sign by himself to win over his opponent. Such guessing progress reveals the mind translating process. Two interpretants would generate new signs, including oral signs and finger signs.

The working sign system is repeated until one player speaks out the right oral sign to end the round. We may have a complete clue of the sign translation systems from both players' aspects until now. First is the quasi-mind, then comes the oral signs and finger signs, and then the interpretants of both signs. More accurately, the mind is a sign. The mind has ordered the player to translate corresponding oral signs and finger signs. The oral signs and finger signs are just the respective dynamical and immediate objects of the mind sign based on its actual working effect. The two objects would have two critical interpretants to repeat in mind again with the translating flow. However, the second mind translation should be new growth of signs, and such mind translating system would keep running until the Oral object of mind sign ends that round of Thumb Fight. Until now, we have a clear introduction of the round of sign--- object---interpretant of the Thumb Fight translating system during its playing from both sides.

“The concept of the sign as a three-place relation also throws light on another aspect of signification, namely the fact that a sign never exists alone, that is, without connection to other signs. For every sign must, as a matter of definition, be interpretable. This, however, presupposes the existence of at least one other sign” (Oehler 1987, p.7). From Oehler's words, we may know that the legal existence of one interpretant is the precondition of its corresponding sign and object from Peirce's triad. Whenever there is an interpretant, there would be its corresponding element. Such dynamic signs growth can explain the indefinite translation progress from Peirce's triad.

In stage (3), when the player's mind sign has its correct Oral object, the player may end one round of the semiosis of the sign system of Thumb Fight. The essential tip for a correct oral object lies in the precise understanding of its dynamical interpretant. The winning tip for the Thumb Fight is to find a proper oral object with the help of a dynamical interpretant by mind sign. That is the core triadic sign relations of the translation sign system of Thumb Fight.

#### 4.3 A standard case study in Thumb Fight

Due to its complicated sign systems, it is necessary to show a case study in this part to help readers understand its complete translation process under the guidance of translation semiotics. For understanding consideration, we may use a simple case to illustrate. The simple means that the Thumb Fight ends after the third quasi-mind. The presentation method of this case analysis will follow the three main stages introduced above, the three main signs, and the written form of oral signs and finger signs. The players in the case are player A and player B.

Player A and player B first chant the lead-in phrase twice --- Disorderly Chopping Firewood(乱劈柴), and both would thumb up, squeeze the other four fingers into a fist, and tap the thumb and the back of the hand lightly to show the friendship. After the first two symbol signs performance, both players would chant different oral signs with varied finger signs from the third time.

From the third time, player A chants out: “Liuliushun(六六顺)”, and player B chants out: “Jiubiliangshigui(酒比粮食贵)”. From the above introduction, player A chants oral sign **Six** while player B chants **Nine**. Meanwhile, player A extends his thumb while player B extends his thumb, middle finger, ring finger, and little finger. From the regulations of finger sign, during the third extending, player A shows sign number **One**, and player B **four**. The oral sign **Six** is the dynamical object of player A's thought signs or the 3rd quasi-mind, and the finger sign **One** is the immediate object. The oral sign **Nine** is the dynamical object of player B's 3rd quasi-mind, and the finger sign **four** is the immediate object. The third time, the sum of both players extending finger signs should be **5** in an Arabic form. The player's oral signs do not equal the numerical value of **5**, and the third time does not have the winner, which means the Thumb Fight should keep running into the fourth time. Before the fourth time, both players would make a respective translating based on the third performance. Player A would translate player B's immediate object, the finger sign **four**, as an immediate interpretant of his fourth quasi-mind translation. Based on the immediate interpretant, player A would launch a precise calculation and prediction of player B's fourth extending, and then player A translates his comprehensive

guessing into the fourth quasi-mind, the hidden thought signs, and decides his fourth chanting and extending, which would be the new oral signs and finger signs in a new translation time. The same translation progress also happens in player B's quasi-mind.

In the fourth quasi-mind, player A's translation helps him chant out "Jiubiliangshigui(酒<sup>jiù</sup>比<sup>bǐ</sup>粮<sup>liáng</sup>食<sup>shí</sup>贵<sup>guì</sup>)" while extending all his five fingers like an open palm. The fourth thought-signs translate into oral sign **Nine** and finger sign **five**. Player B's translation helps him chant out "Liuliuishun(六<sup>liù</sup>六<sup>liù</sup>顺<sup>shùn</sup>)" while extending his thumb, middle finger, ring finger, and little finger altogether. The fourth thought signs translate into oral sign **Six** and finger sign **four**. The fourth time, the sum of both players extending finger signs should be **9** in an Arabic form. According to its rule, the oral sign should be the dynamical object, which determines the winning result of the Thumb Fight. In the translating process, player A oral signs equal the numerical value of **9**, and player A wins over player B. therefore, the playing ends.

The above case is the primary simple case sharing to help readers understand the translating process of signs playing the Thumb Fight. Judging from the validity of the analysis, it is logical and explanatory. It also confirms the rationality and persuasiveness of the argument of this article.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on a brief introduction to its sign essence and characteristics of the Thumb Fight, this article builds a systematic analysis framework of translation semiotics. It applies the theoretical framework of translation semiotics to the whole playing process of Thumb Fight. The example analysis concludes that this article's translation semiotics analysis framework of Thumb Fight is feasible. It provides a new perspective for the operation of Thumb Fight and effectively explains the types of signs in the operation of Thumb Fight, which conforms to the logical translation process.

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